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Winter

Number 144

June - August 2008

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Earth Garden

SUSTAINABLE LIVING WITH COUNTRY OR CITY ALTERNATIVES

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And Some Forest**

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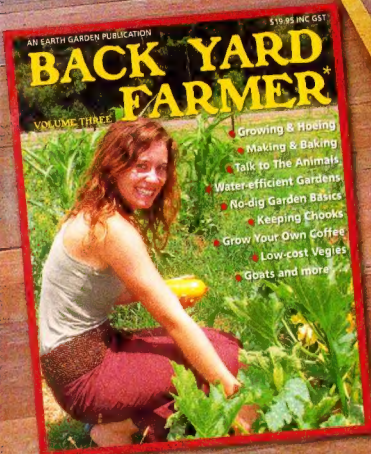
Liz's Weekend Hippy

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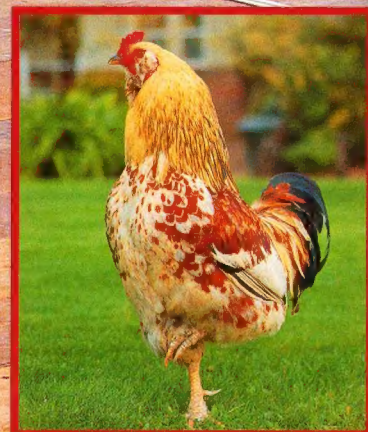
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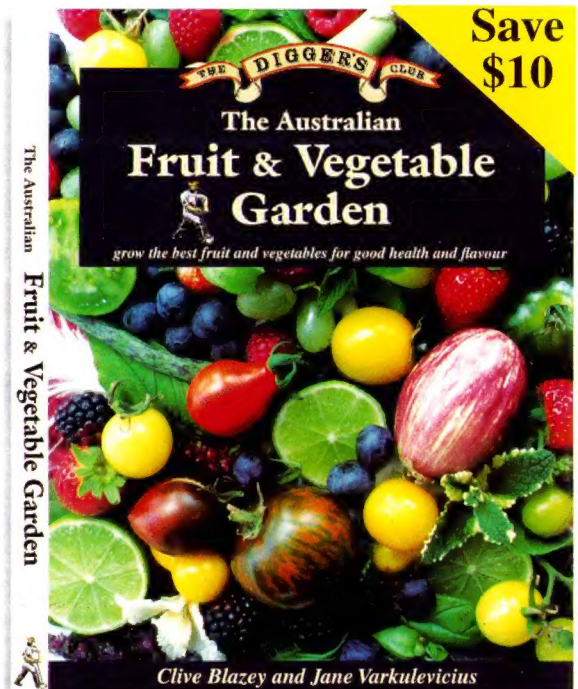
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Cover: First time owner builder, 23 year old Tane Thomas of Hobart, pauses for breath while laying his first roomful of recycled flooring.

Earth Garden

SUSTAINABLE LIVING WITH COUNTRY OR CITY ALTERNATIVES

Number 144

June – August 2008

Saving forests by avoiding new flooring was one benefit — saving over \$10,000 was another. Read about Tane's methods starting on page 22.

EcoTax: this issue's EcoTax will go to help the 30 acre Ganngjalah cultural and environmental education centre in Bundjalang country in northern New South Wales with their educational workshops and youth services. For more information about Ganngjalah visit their website at www.culturalgardens.org.au.



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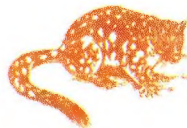
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Founded by Keith & Irene Smith, 1972.

EARTH GARDEN is Australia's original journal of sustainable living and alternatives. It is a forum of practical ideas, shared knowledge, sources and a guide to alternatives to high-consumption lifestyles.

It's about putting a roof over your head, growing your own food organically, aiming for appropriate, renewable home energy systems and surviving — and thriving — in the city or the bush, with the inner changes which follow when you're in harmony with Nature.

EcoTax: each issue we donate a portion of the cover price to a community group involved in conservation or social justice projects to help balance the use of the paper used for printing *Earth Garden*. We would like to see all publishers pay an EcoTax.

Earth Garden is produced in a strawbale, solar air-heated office with grid-connected solar power, and is printed on paper made from plantation-grown timber.

Earth Garden is a member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Visit our Web page at: www.earthgarden.com.au.

Contributions to *Earth Garden* are welcome: sharing information and experiences with other readers strengthens the network of Earth Gardeners. Photos and sketches are important. Please send us good-quality digital photos with your written contribution, either on a disk/CD, or by email to: editorial@earthgarden.com.au. Please write first with your story idea. Subscribers are sustainers: for subscription details see page 80.

We welcome advertisements appropriate to the aims and ideals of *Earth Garden*, but reserve the right to refuse ads at our discretion. Contact us for display rates.

Printed by Newsprinters, Shepparton, Vic. Distributed to newsagents by NDD.

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(We don't have the resources to staff telephone enquiries: please write or fax.)



Beyond The Bitumen

Dear readers,

Welcome to the winter issue of *Earth Garden*. Now's a perfect time in southern Australia to sit back and flick through a few seed catalogues, plant some fruit trees, and plan ways to improve your gardening next season. Having a breather gives us all a chance to reflect on what went right or wrong over the previous spring to autumn busy time in the garden. It's also a good chance to think about water conservation and ways to further improve the delivery of whatever water appears on your land — through a pipe or falling out of the sky (you wish) to nourish your plants and trees.

Today in Trentham, in early May it's "foggy, wet, cold, but lovely in a wintry atmospheric way". Nicely put by our whirlwind Editorial Co-ordinator, Fiona. We get plenty of time in Trentham — in the hills of central Victoria — to plan our activities for warmer parts of the year!

In the past couple of months we've had a mountain of giant timber slabs milled on site from the macrocarpa pines on our one acre property. Some of these slabs are nearly ten metres long and three metres wide. They are now wire-tied together in piles, separated by timber spacers and wrapped in black plastic, with the ends painted to reduce splitting, and will slowly air dry over the next couple of years until we're ready to use them or sell some. The offcuts from the slab milling will keep the EG cottage in firewood for donkeys' years.

Meanwhile our 15 heritage apples, planted last year, have been thriving and our 30-odd olive trees have all sur-

vived a turbulent summer season. Very slowly our one acre paddock is heading towards our long-term goal of making it a self-sustaining food forest.

At our farm up the road we have made dramatic progress with our seven year old farm forestry project. I spent a good two hours most summer evenings pruning the biggest 500 of our 3200 hand-tended trees, removing all branches over thumb-thickness to a height of six metres, thanks to my trusty telescopic pole saw.

It was a wonderful way to enjoy working at the farm, surrounded by rows of healthy, fast-growing trees we'd planted in the driest year known in the district. Some of our trees are now more than 12 metres high with trunks thicker than a power pole, and growing tall and straight, thanks to the brilliant research and organic soil preparation and growing methods that Judith has used in conjunction with our dear friend and tree contractor, Dave Griffiths of Geometree.

We are now at the stage where we have a lifetime supply of organically-grown firewood — and that's just from the prunings and thinnings.

It has been very satisfying to stand by myself in the middle of the paddock in the fading light, having just finished a couple of hours of energetic pruning. It was like a good upper body workout every night, and I got to see the fruits of my labours as I packed away my saw each evening and then pottered home in the dark on my old Enfield Bullet motorbike.

Dave has since gone through the paddock thinning out the weak and twisted trees, leaving the best with enough space and nutrients to grow on strongly. We are now into the next stage of our farm forestry project where, once we clean up the thinned trees and stack the firewood, we will be left with an open paddock of tall straight trees growing strongly and packing on the centimetres of diameter. Our remaining high-grade trees should grow on for fine furniture timbers to help replace a fraction of the legalised theft of public forests that happens in Australia and south-east Asia. Cleaning up the thinned trees feels a little like cleaning up garden beds for next year's vegies or herbs.

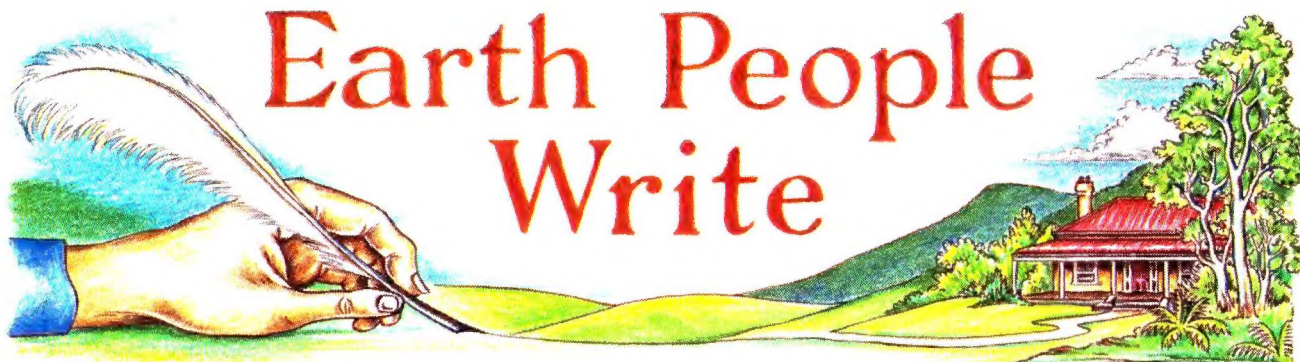
As the seasons tick over we get the delighted satisfaction of watching our trees grow and flourish at our tree farm or at the office. It's an addictive way to manage land, as most Earth Gardeners know. I hope you will find much to feed your addiction in our winter pages.

Happy reading,

Alan



Alan and Judith's tree farm contractor, Dave Griffiths of Geometree (www.geometree.com.au), surveys the thinnings at the Grays' tree farm in March this year.



Earth People Write is an open forum. The views expressed in letters from readers do not necessarily reflect the opinions of *Earth Garden*. Letters are always welcome, but please keep them concise. Our favourite letter writer in this issue will receive a copy of *Back Yard Ovens*.

Weekend hippy a highlight

Dear Liz Ingham,

I promised myself I'd write and tell you how much I loved your most recent 'Weekend Hippy' contribution to *Earth Garden*. Your column has become one of the highlights of the mag for me and the last one was a pearler. Your thoughts about Stuff and being silent in the bush and what is real in the world and the succinct way you expressed it really resonated with me. I mean SERIOUSLY resonated. It was like one of those big Tibetan bells going off in my head and I read it over and over. So thanks, and keep up the extraordinary work!

Scot. Via Email.

Learning lots

Dear *Earth Garden*,

I have read your magazine since meeting my hubby as he always read it. We both had an interest in the simple life as it seems. Now seven years later we decided it was time for a change in lifestyle so we started looking for a house with land to live in. Well, we found a small house with five acres in Yalca, Victoria, near Cobram. So we sold up and moved here for, as we call it, a 'tree change'. We love it and wondered why we didn't do it earlier.

We have now been here for five months and we both work part-time in the local area and spend the rest of our time looking after the property and ever-growing animals. There is always something to do around the house with the veggie garden, planting trees, and so on. We plan to be semi-self-sufficient but coming from the city we have heaps of things to learn.

I would just like to say thank you for all the advice your magazine has given us on everything from growing foods

to building advice. We look forward to every issue arriving. I would love to meet up with any other people in this area doing the same sort of thing. Email: korrinadonovan@hotmail.com.

Korrina Donovan. Via Email.

Movable chook pen plans

Hello to all the wonderful people at *Earth Garden*!

I have been full of good intentions (during the many years of receiving my favourite magazine) to contact you with a huge message of thanks. I have carefully packed away my mags ready for some very enjoyable reminiscing times — some time soon I hope!

Meantime, I am seeking assistance on behalf of my sister who is very busy on her biodynamic farm, and in need of some information about possible purchase of a movable chook pen or plans for constructing one. I have read about this in the past, but cannot remember which issue this was in, or whether I read an article, or just saw an advertisement.

If you are able to send me information I would be most grateful — even sketches or pictures would be helpful, although a possible contact would be even better.

I hope this won't be a bother, but your help will be very much appreciated. Best wishes to all. Email: bernway@netspace.net.au.

Bernadette O'Brien. Via Email.

Hi Bernadette,

You might want to give the good people at 'McCallum Made Chicken Tractors' a call. Ph: 1800 337 874. Or if your sister wants to make her own, we recommend our very own Chook Wisdom book, which is chock full of all things chook!

Available through The Good Life Book Club. Ph: (03) 5424 1814. And no bother at all Bernadette.

— Fiona

Surprise and wonder

Hello all!

So much enjoy and appreciate the work put into the mag (colour is lovely by the way) and everyone's contributions ... we all have heaps to ~~learn~~ don't we? Always interested in people's letters and the amazing ideas they come up with ... nothing so surprising and wonderful as the ingenuity of people in general when faced with problems to solve is there? Heaps of success to all of you out there trying to do the right thing ... we live in the suburbs and for a number of reasons cannot do the 'tree change' ... however we do what we can where we can ... a special thought for Theresa Gilligan (EPW, EG 142) at Inverloch ... a very brave soul to try the bush block move in her later years (I'm the same age) ... all the very best to you and your son. My dream has always been a strawbale or a muddie but haven't been able to manage it so far.

A word on water, which is something we have been able to improve on. We use tank water for laundry and garden, which has brought our usage of town water down to 95 litres a day for two of us, which honestly hasn't inconvenienced us too much. We're surprised we even use that much. I have the advantage of 11 years of bush living experience from many years ago when I had a baby and one tank of two-and-a-half thousand gallons at the time for everything, so that helped.

Someone was asking about Scuppernongs (EPW, EG 141). I'd be interested too but so far have not found a source of supply. But I did find Marula

Plum seeds, another useful backyard fruit supply suggested by the late Josef Tamaliunas in a series of articles in your mag a year or two ago. These were all South African plants or trees that he believed would do well in some parts of this country, particularly the Brisbane area as climate is similar to their country of origin. I now have two Marula Plum trees, one just taller than myself ... looks very healthy but as yet have not flowered or fruited ... I live in hope!

Something else of interest I have is a Drumstick Tree now taller than me ... so far we've used flowers and leaves in salads, providing an extra source of greens ... anyone know any more about these things? Now I'm trying a Goji bush ... as yet only small but I live in hope for this too.

Lastly ... for fresh greens we've found we like the Asian greens, which grow fast rather than the usual Northern Hemisphere type of veg we grew up with, although we do use them too.

Cheers one and all ... successful green living! And thank goodness for a change of government! Email: rsmether@bigpond.net.au

Val S. Via Email.

Dear readers,

If you wish to reply to an emailed letter, but you don't have the internet, please feel free to send your reply to us via the post.

— Fiona

Floury tomatoes and bitter blackberries

Dear Earth Garden,

Just a couple of quick questions: I have some Tiny Tim, Yellow Tear Drop, Roma and Grosse Lisse tomatoes, but this year they are floury, a bit tasteless and not very juicy. I also have the domestic blackberry, which is just ripening. However, the luscious-looking fruit tastes quite bitter. Do you have any helpful ideas? Thanks. Email: cmay@mayrussell.com.au

Chris May. Via Email.

Potbelly stove knowhow wanted

Hi,

Do you have any articles (back issues) on potbelly stove installation and maintenance available? If so, could you let me know how I could go about accessing or purchasing them.

Many thanks. Email: ray-homeview@bigpond.com

Ray. Via Email.

Hi Ray,

You could try Jill Redwood's article on wood stoves, which featured in issue 136. And perhaps readers can help with more information.

— Fiona

Bunker for batteries info

Hello,

I am hoping you may be able to assist me with an enquiry. We are going solar and would like to build a bunker-type arrangement to house the batteries. Do you know where we may be able to find some info about how to go about this project? Thanks in advance! Email: barwondowns@gmail.com

Kaz Kost. Via Email.

Heating and cooling

Dear Earth Garden experts,

The *Green Power Today* book is most interesting. Thank you! I have been wondering if anyone has done a comparison of the following systems that, to uninitiated eyes, look pretty much the same: Solarventi (www.ges.com.au) and Sun Lizard (Alternative Fuels and Energy). Also, do you know if having the old-fashioned air vents at the top of the walls would do much to offset the value of either system? Do you have any comments on either system? Anything to help would be most appreciated. Many thanks. Email: lynnocon@yahoo.com.au

Lyn. Via Email.

Maintaining dams, not insects

Hi there,

My name is Alanna Burton and I was wondering if you could help me with info on conserving water in my dams, as the more shallow ones (and the big one) dry up very quickly in summer. Also, what can I plant around or on them to help prevent evaporation and promote frog life. I live at Buangor, near Ararat, Victoria, very dry area (what isn't these days?)

Also, I have a big problem with earwigs and large ants that tend to cover my paths, climb my fruit trees and eat the fruit (the ants that is, the earwigs are in my walls and sheds). I really want something non-toxic, of course, to repel them. Hope you can help. Thanks. Email: dorsal@dodo.com.au

Alanna. Via Email.

Chook tractors in the tropics

Dear Earth Garden,

I love reading your magazine: it keeps me inspired to one day have my

own patch of earth to call my own and live life as I really would like to. Alas, in the meantime we're renting a house with a big back garden. I've previously had three chooks with a fixed pen and separate veggie garden and have read a permaculture book. This time (we just moved) I'm willing to give permaculture a go. I live in Townsville and most of the advice in the magazine and book is generally for all those living down south in the cooler climates. If I set up a moveable chook pen to rotate every two weeks what do I do with my chooks for the other four to five months of the year when it's too hot and wet to grow anything up here? Also, have you heard of a permaculture club in Townsville? I would love to meet any like-minded veggie growers that survive up here amongst all the consumerised apartment-dwelling city folk. Email: Laura.OConnor@gbrmpa.gov.au

Laura, Townsville, Qld.

Dear Laura,

You're lucky: Permaculture Townsville is an excellent group in your area. Write to: PO Box 612, Thuringowa Central BC, Qld, 4817, or phone 4775 2332. I'm sure they'll be able to help with all your chook and other queries. Good luck!

— Alan

Divining different views

Dear Editor,

In EG 138, your writer advises readers to get in a water diviner to find water. Diviners cannot detect subterranean supplies of water (even above ground), and if they succeed in 'finding water', they do so in spite of, and not because of, their so-called abilities. Dowisers cannot detect changes in the Earth's magnetic field over spots where water flows; it usually boils down to either a lucky guess or local knowledge, or sometimes they do have an understanding of hydrology. Even a sensitive magnetometer or gauss meter can't detect these changes, so are bits of bent wire or forked sticks more sensitive than the best scientific instruments? Alanna states that people have "an inherent electro-magnetic sensitivity". Having worked with electro-magnetic test equipment all my life, and taught the subject for over 30 years, I'd like to know how. What is the source of her information? What level of sensitivity are we talking about? And where are the biological sensors in human beings, so that we may study them further, and

perhaps improve the results?

Over many years, competitors at the Australian Skeptics dowsing challenges have always failed to get above the statistical level of pure chance. And this, after they have all successfully 'calibrated' their detection devices beforehand (while knowing which pipe the water was flowing through). However, during the actual test, they were spectacularly unsuccessful. Afterwards, it almost made me cry to listen to all the excuses they offered, like "negative vibrations from the skeptics present". It raises the question: "How did they all successfully calibrate their devices before the test runs began?" The Skeptics' prize money is still safely in the bank, for anyone who still thinks they "have the gift".

I'm a keen gardener, and over the years I have grown natives, fruits, and veggies. Your mag has often carried some useful tips for gardeners, but divining for water is not one of them.

In every country around the world there are aquifers under most regions, in porous sandstones, beds of rubble from ancient river beds, fissures in rocks, underground streams, caves and lakes, and deep artesian basins, such as the one where I grew up in western Queensland. In short, there is water almost anywhere you look for it. It would be more convincing if dowsers could consistently divine a 'dry well', and the American magician, James Randi, has offered a prize for doing so. But again so far, no one has claimed the prize.

Bernie Doran, Caboolture, Qld.

Ways of heating and cooling

Hi everyone,

My husband was interested in anyone who has ideas of venting exhaust from various heating/electrical appliances into a central heating/drying room for the household. I was wondering if anyone had either excavated to create a coolroom/walk-in pantry with earth or thickened walls (of whatever material) for further cooling insulation of goods and the viability of such. Email: lilea@breakwall.com.au

Lilea Propadalo. Via Email.

Dear Lilea,

Great idea; and I've just read that IBM are building a computer centre in a town in Switzerland where the 70+ degree heat emanating from the whirring computers will be funnelled through heat

exchangers of some kind to heat the local council swimming pool next door. How groovy's that! Let's hope some readers have a residential-scale answer to your query.

— Alan.

Ripples In the pond

Hi all,

I had been watching the office of EG being built, and bought the *Green Power Today* book. We moved from wet Kinglake in Victoria (green and fairly good rain) to Tarnagulla, west of Bendigo in Victoria, dry, hot, great small town, small house to make do until we decide what we are doing. Be very suburban and talk to a well known everyday home building firm about building an everyday (see standard brick house), place with a few changes. We were asked if we wanted ducted heating and cooling.

"No, actually we were thinking if you could enquire about a Sun Lizard", I replied. And blow me down, I got a call from the nice fellow coming up with our changed design (can't help it, we did change a bit of their design). My partner Peter had passed on the website of Sun Lizard, and Nick (the company person) rang us and asked where I had heard of it, and was quite in awe of the phone call he had had with them and told me that he had actually passed this on to colleagues in his company as he thinks they are such a great idea. Finally, the mainstream is catching on to the ideas that all at EG have been quietly working with for a long time now.

Pammie, Tarnagulla, Vic.

Support Aussie garlic

Hi all,

I hope sustainable living in the city goes well for you. We need to boost the Aussie garlic industry in united force. We have to keep requesting local garlic, not buying imported because it is cheaper! There is no comparison for size and flavour unless you are the lucky ones and grow it yourself ... let's all help get them back on their feet! And keep our health. If anyone is a commercial grower I would love to hear from them. Email: sales@morrisoutside.com.au

Jan. Via Email.

Choose to survive or fail

Dear Earth Garden,

In reply to Mich@el (EPW, EG

142). The answer to the question is sadly a resounding "YES". Our world is in a rapidly increasing spiral of decline. In a very short space of time we are going to see changes in our immediate world that people would never have dreamed possible in their lifetime, let alone their grandchildren's lifetime. I would like to recommend Mich@el read a book called *Collapse — How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive*, by Jared Diamond. ISBN 0-7139-9862-8. It is extremely factual and not filled with 'what if' scenarios but well researched facts.

Kind regards.

Bob. Via Email.

Guernsey please

Hello everyone,

I love reading your mag. Loads of useful information that can be used on our ten-acre property in south-west WA. I get quite excited when I see someone from our community of 300 writing in to *Earth People Write*. This community seems to have a number who want to leave a lighter footprint. I have a request of all the people in the south-west of WA: my family would like to buy a milking cow. So if anyone knows of a Guernsey for sale could they please email me. My email address is maygriffiths@bigpond.com. Many thanks.

May. Via Email.

Dear May,

Once you find your dream Guernsey, you may want to buy *The Healthy House Cow* by Marja Fitzgerald. It was the first EG book I published, back in about 1987, but I think there are still a few copies in the warehouse.

— Alan

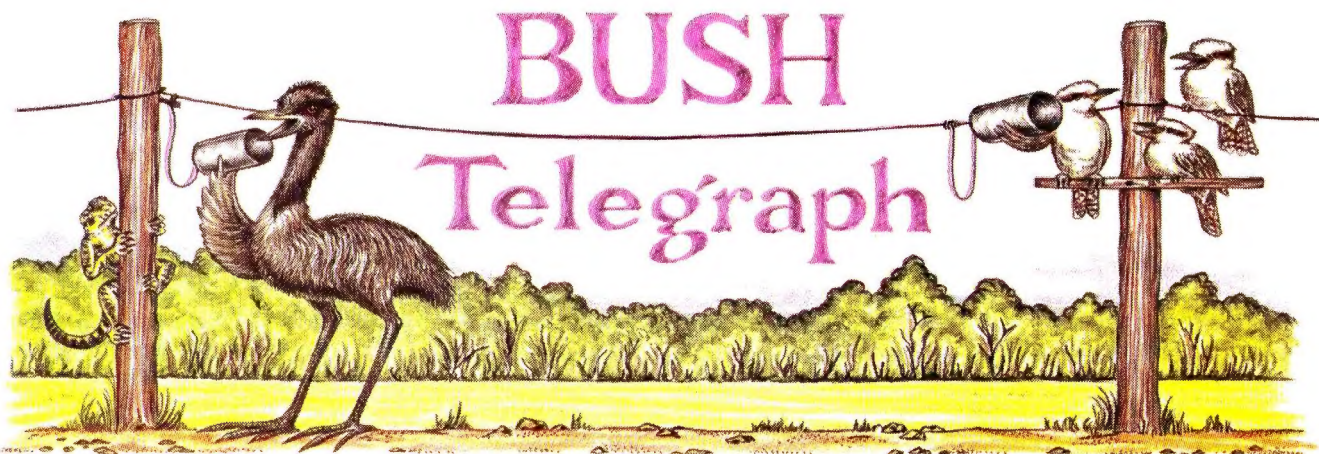
Ant invasion

Dear Earth Garden,

I have just found that my second worm farm has been killed and eaten by the local ants (I live in Bendigo, Victoria). Can you please help me with some ideas of how to keep them at bay? Also, the ants are invading the house, and I'm looking for a way to stop them without using poisons. Any ideas would be much appreciated. Thanks. Email: emily_gasko@hotmail.com.

Emily. Via Email.

**Earth People Write
continues on page 66**



Any news items which may interest Earth Gardeners may be submitted to *Bush Telegraph*. Please send notice of meetings, festivals and gatherings well in advance of the events.

Rich World "Must Back 80 Per Cent Carbon Cuts"

Rich countries must commit to cutting carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 and developing nations must agree that by 2020 they too will set their own targets, leading economist Nicholas Stern said on 1 May. He said the only way the world could defeat the climate crisis was by ensuring that global carbon emissions peaked within 15 years, were then halved from 1990 levels to 20 billion tonnes a year by 2050, and cut to 10 billion thereafter.

"There is a real hurry for this. The developed world must lead by example," Mr Stern said. The global carbon market had to be expanded and improved, there had to be massive investment in research and development in low carbon technologies, and rich nations had to bear the brunt and help the poorer world leapfrog into a low carbon era. Mr Stern said the developing world, where emissions are booming as economies grow, should be given time to prepare to sign up to caps and cuts but that time should have a strict limit and by 2020 they too should be reducing emissions.

Mr Stern, a former British Treasury economist whose seminal work 18 months ago on the economics of climate change galvanised the international agenda, said the emission target was based on the goal of halting the temperature rise to two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. That in turn means achieving global average carbon emissions of just two tonnes per head — 20 billion tonnes divided by the anticipated world population of nine billion people — from the current average of seven tonnes per head, he said.

"Everything flows from the figures. That is the simplicity of the argument. If you buy into stabilisation at 500 parts per million (atmospheric carbon — equivalent

to two degrees rise) the rest is arithmetic," Mr Stern told an audience at the London School of Economics.

As emissions in the United States already stood at 20 tonnes per head, with those in Europe and Japan between 10 and 12 tonnes, that meant the bulk of the efforts had to come from the rich world. But even China, whose economy is growing at ten per cent a year and which is building a coal-fired power station a week, was already emitting five tonnes of carbon a head and India was close to two tonnes and would soon exceed that. That meant that they too would have to slow, halt and reverse their emissions. —Reuters

Britain To Ban Food Colourings

Britain's food and safety watchdog has called for a Europe-wide ban on six artificial food colourings. The watchdog says a British study has linked the additives to hyperactivity in children.

The study found that children behaved impulsively and lost concentration after consuming drinks containing the additives. Food and drink manufacturers say they are already starting to remove the additives from their products. —ABC



Canadian Province To Ban Garden Pesticides

Canada's Ontario province says it will ban the sale and general use of pesticides in what the province says will be among the toughest such environmental laws in North America. Canada's most populous province said the new legislation, expected to take effect next spring, would outlaw homeowners' use of lawn and garden pesticides for such things as killing dandelions. Exceptions would be made for golf courses, farms and forests.

In Canada, only the province of Quebec has a similar ban, and according to the pesticide industry no US State has such a ban in place.

"Our generation is becoming more and more aware of the potential risks in our environment, not only to our health, but to our children's health," Ontario's Liberal Premier, Dalton McGuinty, said in announcing the legislation. The Canadian Cancer Society, which has lobbied for bans by cities and provinces, said it was happy the legislation targeted both sales and use.

"We are pleased it's going to be implemented so quickly," spokeswoman Irene Gallagher said. A number of municipalities in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada have already banned pesticide use. —Reuters

Study Links Breast Cancer To Drinking

A large US study has linked alcohol consumption to an increased risk of the most common type of breast cancer in postmenopausal women. Jasmine Lew, a researcher at the National Cancer Institute and the study's lead investigator, said the analysis of data from more than 184,000 women was the biggest of three major studies to conclude that drinking raised the

risk of breast cancer for older women. The research found that women who had one to two small drinks a day were 32 per cent more likely to develop a hormone-sensitive tumour. Three or more drinks a day raised the risk by 51 per cent.

"Regardless of the type of alcohol, the risk was evident," Ms Lew said, presenting the findings at a meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research. About 70 per cent of women who are diagnosed with breast cancer have tumours that are positive for both the estrogen and progesterone receptors. Ms Lew said results from the NCI study lend credence to the theory that alcohol's interference with the metabolism of estrogen raises the risk of cancer. She said it was too early to make public health recommendations but said women should talk with their doctors to assess risk factors and consider lifestyle changes. Other studies have linked light consumption of alcoholic drinks, especially red wine, to heart protection. Breast cancer is the second most common cancer killer of women, after lung cancer. It will be diagnosed in 1.2 million people globally this year and will kill 500,000.

—Reuters

Beware Vegie-Growing Soil History In Your Back Yard

Homegrown vegies can be toxic from poisons left behind from industry, orchards or mine sites, warn scientists. Back yard gardeners can think they are growing a healthier choice, but sometimes they ingest arsenic, cadmium, lead and DDT.

"As our cities and towns grow, they sprawl across old orchards or farms, mine sites and former industrial plants or gas-works which have left residues of toxic contamination in the soil," said Euan Smith, from the Co-operative Research Centre for Contamination Assessment and Remediation and the Environment (CRC CARE). Dr Smith said the greater risk was from breathing in the contaminated dust or through skin contact with the soil.

"This underlines the need to wash garden vegetables in such soils as thoroughly as anything bought from a shop, to remove traces of contaminated dust," he said. Dr Smith said in most cases toxin levels in the diet would be within safety limits.

"If you're planning to grow a lot of vegetables, it might pay to investigate the industrial history of the land your house sits on," he said. CARE managing director, Ravi Naidu, said arsenic was used 100 years ago to control sheep and cattle parasites. Arsenic was also a concern at old gold diggings, he said.

"Australians eat quite large amounts

of homegrown produce," Professor Naidu said. Organic produce was subject to the same problem if on a contaminated site. Highways could also deposit toxins and septic systems could put phosphates in the soil. Prof Naidu said root vegetables were likely to absorb more toxins than leafy plants. CARE aims to quantify the risk, working out whether the pollutants finish up in the roots, stem, fruits or leaves. Silverbeet, lettuce, radish, tomatoes, zucchini, carrots, potatoes and cabbages are among the vegetables being examined by the research. Hobart store City Organics owner, Brett Stephens, said site history could pose a risk.

"I still think homegrown is best but there are some areas around Hobart where there are issues," Mr Stephens said.

—The Mercury

World First: 'Hydrogen' Plane Flies 1000 Metres

US aircraft maker Boeing has flown a plane powered by a hydrogen battery, a "first in the history of aviation", a senior company official said on 4 April in Spain. Boeing chief technology officer, John Tracy, said the flight, conducted at the start of this year, and development of the technology was "full of promises for a greener future".

"This is a historical technological success for Boeing." The propeller-driven plane flew in a straight line for about 20 minutes at an altitude of about 1000m, Boeing said. "Boeing announced today that it has, for the first time in aviation history, flown a manned airplane powered by hydrogen fuel cells," it said.

—AFP



SA Bluegums 'Thousands Of Years Old'

An unusual group of bluegums on private property in South Australia includes at least one tree that could be thousands of years old. While this species of bluegum (*Eucalyptus bicostata*) is not endangered, this particular population is genetically

and ecologically unique. This group of trees is the only known population of *E. bicostata* in South Australia.

"This makes it of significant biological interest and high conservation value," says University of Tasmania PhD student, Rebecca Jones. The population at Mt Bryan, near Hallett, has been the focus of local attention recently due to its proximity to a proposed wind farm site. The trees are geographically unique in that they are about 700 km from the nearest other native population of this species of bluegum (located at Mt Cole in western Victoria) and is the only population west of the Murray-Darling drainage system.

Ms Jones's supervisor, Associate Professor René Vaillancourt, has estimated that one tree could be up to 2000 years old, based upon the slow growth rate of the lignotubers which are a feature of this population. Lignotubers are gnarly looking woody tissues found at the base of many eucalypt species that grow very slowly (approximately 2.5 millimetres per year) and protect the buds that enable the tree to propagate without seed (vegetative propagation). If the tree is repeatedly damaged or burnt, it will re-sprout from its lignotubers, forming a multi-stemmed stand of clonal trees. So trees that have propagated in this way can be very old.

"This growth form is seen in many of the bluegums at Mt Bryan. There is one tree in particular that consists of stems forming an almost perfect ring shape nearly ten metres in diameter," says Ms Jones.

Hybrid Toyota Built In Australia?

Car giant, Toyota, is poised to manufacture its hybrid Camry in Melbourne with a deal set to be clinched by mid-year. Talks are still under way but senior Toyota executives in Tokyo are strongly backing plans to make the company's Altona plant the regional production base for the green Camry, Fairfax newspapers report. The deal will go ahead providing the right government incentives are secured, and the federal government is aiming for an announcement by the end of July. Victorian Premier John Brumby has been in discussions with Tokuichi Uanishi, executive vice-president of Toyota in Japan. And senior Victorian cabinet ministers, armed with the government's \$500-million green car fund, have met Japanese diplomatic officials and Toyota executives in an effort to secure the vehicle for Altona. Federal Innovation Minister Kim Carr said negotiations with Toyota were continuing "fruitfully". The 'green' Camry is currently in production in Japan and the US but only reduces petrol consumption from 9.9 l/100 km to 5.7 l/100 km.

"Perhaps some of that \$500 million could also be spent on fleet orders for a car that uses zero litres/100 km, like the fully-electric Blade Runner from Blade Electric Vehicles, said a (rather smug) Alan Gray of *Earth Garden*.

Tips For Bird Friendly Back Yards

Creating hedges with local native shrubs, installing a bird bath, or building a nest box are just some of the tips for creating bird-friendly gardens in a new series of guidelines from the Birds in Backyards Program, a joint project of Birds Australia and the Australian Museum.

The guidelines provide the first comprehensive summary of scientific research on birds in urban areas and offer advice to those keen to create a refuge for our feathered friends. The 'Guidelines for the Development of Urban Bird Habitat' summarise the findings of more than 120 scientific papers in simple, user-friendly language and are now available and free to download from the Birds in Backyards website – www.birdsinbackyards.net/spaces/guidelines.cfm.

There are seven step-by-step handouts for a variety of gardening gurus – from the 'green-thumb' living in high-density housing to rural townships, schools and large companies undertaking major urban construction. Birds in Backyards Program Manager, Holly Parsons, says creating bird-friendly habitat – particularly for rare and smaller species – is something we all should get involved in.

"While a single garden cannot provide everything a bird needs, it's a start. Our bird community is changing; smaller birds are declining while large, aggressive birds are becoming commonplace in our gardens," she said. "It is not only up to the individual gardener to think about their gardening practices. Local councils and developers who decide how large parcels of land are managed have a huge responsibility to ensure the survival of our native birds – especially as natural habitats continue to be cleared, water becomes scarcer and animals are forced to move in response to climate change," she says. Ms Parsons hopes the guidelines will raise awareness of the value of birds in our urban areas and the importance of this habitat to them. She says a range of measures can be taken to create good bird habitat in our gardens.

"Studies show that many of our small birds need a shrub layer so planting native plants like hakeas, tea trees and local native grevilleas (as opposed to the popular hybrids) may help create a great habitat for them. Little birds need dense shrubs to protect them from attacks and predation by other larger, more aggressive birds." The

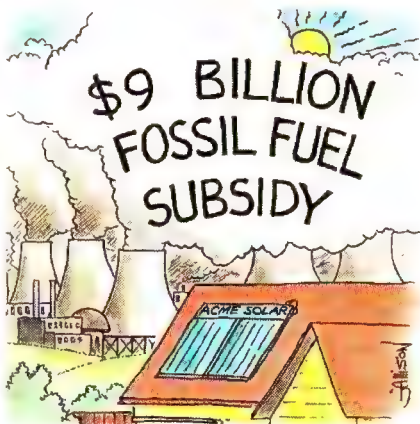
guidelines are applicable to all Australian towns and cities. They include examples of successful gardens and urban restoration projects from across the country to inspire individuals and groups to undertake their own work. As more urban research is conducted, the guidelines will be updated to incorporate the latest knowledge.

Poll Finds 76 Per Cent Want Renewables Subsidy

Three-quarters of Australians would prefer the federal government to subsidise renewable energy instead of fossil fuels, an opinion poll has found. The Galaxy Research poll conducted for independent political group GetUp! found 76 per cent wanted renewables like wind and solar power funded in the federal budget. This compared with 17 per cent who preferred subsidies for fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas.

The survey follows a Newspoll commissioned by Greenpeace in which 60 per cent of respondents thought renewables should get the most funding. GetUp! echoed calls by environment groups for the government to phase out billions of dollars in fossil fuel subsidies. The organisation said the government has spent \$28 on fossil fuels for every \$1 directed to renewables. The Galaxy poll was conducted on 1,600 people over the weekend.

—SMH



900 Million Dollar Bike Plan For London Super Bikeways

London is likely to become one of the world's more cycle-friendly cities, with a series of two-wheeler super highways cutting through traffic and congestion. Plans for the super-cycleways are part of an initiative to stimulate a 400 per cent increase in the number of people pedalling round the British capital by 2025. At a cost of £400 million the 12 routes are intended to be the motorways of cycling and are likely to be emulated by other British cities. Londoners without bikes will be able to use the city's free bicycles.

"We want nothing short of a cycling

transformation in London," said former Mayor, 'Red' Ken Livingstone.

Hydro Predicts Tough Position

Hydro Tasmania's chief executive has conceded the cost of importing power across Basslink will make for a tight financial position. Due to the second lowest rainfall period on record over the past six months Hydro Tasmania had to spend \$11 million importing electricity last month. Chief Executive, Vince Hawksworth, says the expected overall expenditure of \$100 million on imports this year is in line with expectations.

"Fortunately Basslink has enabled us to keep storages although low, significantly above where they would be, it inevitably means we're in a tighter financial situation," he said. Hydro Tasmania hopes to make savings in the long run by investing in renewable energy projects.

Stop Biofuel Crops — UN

New United Nations special adviser on food, Olivier de Schutter, has called for an immediate freeze on investment in biofuels — crops which can be converted into energy, instead of food. Mr de Schutter says the pursuit of biofuels is contributing to a global food crisis threatening 100 million of the world's poorest people. He has described it as a massive violation of basic rights and called for a special session of the UN Human Rights Council to tackle rising food prices and global shortages. "I believe that any new investment in first-generation agri-fuels should be frozen immediately and that we should discuss in an open and transparent manner whether the current levels of production of bio-diesel, bio-ethanol — which are not so bio — should continue," he said.

—ABC

Head Of Devil Program Confident

The outgoing manager of the Tasmanian Devil Program is confident the species can be saved from extinction. More than half of Tasmania's wild devil population has been wiped out by a deadly facial tumour disease and it is soon to be declared an endangered species. But Dr Steven Smith says every effort is being made to ensure the devil is saved from extinction in the wild.

"I believe that we can save the species and I believe we will save the species," Dr Smith said. "I think one of the most important things we're doing in the short term is establishing a viable breeding population that's healthy, that's maintaining the same genetic diversity as found in the wild," he said. Dr Smith retired from his position in May.



Bark huts look great as well as being functional and biodegradable.

Building with Bark

Looking for an inexpensive way of putting a roof over your head while organising something more substantial? You could try what many early settlers did. Jill describes how she built her own bark hut.

by Jill Redwood

Goongerah, Victoria

BARK kept the rain and wind off Aboriginal people for thousands of years, and later the white settlers copied the idea. Bark huts comfortably sheltered many families until they established themselves and built more substantial dwellings. Today the large sheets of relatively weathertight bark are still quick and easy to peel off and put up.

The bigger the tree, the thicker the bark — but I'm certainly not encouraging anyone to look for the big trees to cut down! These are the precious, hollow-bearing, habitat elders and nectar-producing eateries that are extremely

valuable no matter what perfect house site they occupy. All trees are extremely precious these days but where a tree has to be cut down for some other reason, the bark can be salvaged and put to good use to clad a hut, a wood shed, dunny, animal shelters or even your roadside mail box.

Not all barks are suitable but the more fibrous types, from Stringybark and some box species, peel off and weather very well. Clever Mother Nature designed these thick coats to insulate the tree against the intense heat of a bushfire. The tree can then reshoot all the way up the trunk and keep growing. This is why bark is also a good insulator as cladding. It keeps the heat out and the warmth in.

I built and lived in a bark hut for the first eight years after buying my land. It's been standing for 25 years now



Bark makes a good cladding; it keeps the heat out and the warmth in.

The early bark hut builders squashed the sheets of bark between two poles, giving the bark room to expand and contract.



and its walls are still as weatherproof as day one (I used corro iron for the roof). The early settlers' huts became victims of fire, rather than just rotting away. If the bark is vertical, rain runs off and it never gets the opportunity to rot.

There are three basic tricks to building with bark: the peeling, the flattening and the fixing.

Peeling

Peel the tree immediately it's dropped — not the next day. Once the tree stops transporting water up its trunk — which is as soon as you separate it from its root system — its bark coat dries onto the tree. The bark also slips off better when there's more moisture in the tree like after rain.

Run a chainsaw cut along the log's length. In pre-chainsaw days they chopped with an axe zig-zag fashion from end to end. Then start some serious bashing along either side of the cut edge with the back of an axe to loosen the bark from the wood. Once it starts to show a gape, slide the axe under the bark to get it started and it should begin to peel off nicely. If it wants to hang on, just keep bashing and bruising the bark along its length (it sounds like a terribly brutal way to treat a climate-saving tree I know, but keep in mind this is a tree that had to be cut down for other good reasons). I have seen an old shovel hammered to

shape and used as a special bark peeler. If two people work on debarking a log together it can help convince the skin to come away neatly.

Flattening

When your tree has been stripped of its woolly coat, have a smoky fire going nearby to put the roll of bark over (either chimney or lean-to style) to heat its insides. After five minutes or so the heat should make the bark supple. You then straighten the bark out by lying it down and placing a number of weighty poles on top. Sheet after sheet can be stacked this way: bark—poles—bark—poles. Depending on the weather the sheets should be ready to use in a week or so.

At times I've omitted the smoking part (due to bush-fire danger) and weighted the sheets down immediately. They crack a bit and resist the weights but still make acceptable cladding. Roofing bark might need more care though. Bark used for a roof is also best if most of the woolly fibres are scraped off. Diagonally-fixed sheets won't shed the water as easily as vertical bark and so could tend to rot. Oh — and you can't collect crystal-clean drinking water from a bark roof.



Jill's bark hut has been standing for 25 years and its walls are still as weatherproof as day one.

Fixing

The next trick is in the fixing of bark to the pole frame. The nature of fibrous bark means it expands and contracts with humid and dry weather. That means if you just bung the bark sheets up with roofing nails, the sheets crack when it gets hot and dry as it pulls in from the nails. Or it'll bow outwards when it gets damp. The early bark hut builders had that sorted. They squashed the sheets of bark between two poles — one behind and one in front. This gives the bark room to expand and contract side to side while sandwiched between the poles. You might want to line the interior walls or leave the natural look. I jammed the few cracks and gaps in my slapped-up hut with wool or used another cover strip of bark.

Bark huts look great as well as being functional and biodegradable. Their only drawback is their flammability. I doubt you'd get insurance for one. I have to be extremely insistent with WWOOFers who stay in the hut to PLEASE be careful with candles. When the 2003 fires were threatening ember attacks, a friend hooked up a clever system with a roll of half-inch low-density poly pipe under the eaves and poked small holes all the way along the pipe. Then it was connected to the tap. Turned on it created a fish shop window-effect all over the bark. Luckily it didn't get a try-out as the fire stopped when it hit the Snowy National Park ten km away. So the hut still survives as a curiosity piece for visitors and relic of my early settler days.



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Death to the Frozen Carrot!

Search the heart of any culture and you'll find breakfast. Today's most common breakfast is toast and soggies — packaged, pre-cooked bland food that can be eaten on the run, on the go, busy, busy. (There is even a cardboard box in the supermarket aisles that claims to be a liquid breakfast — the list of ingredients on the side of the carton runs to about 20 components, very few of which sound much like food.)

Our food choices tell us who we are

All food choices are ultimately political decisions. English sweet biscuits needed colonies and slaves to provide the sugar. Tomatoes airfreighted from Israel, garlic from Mexico and snow peas from China mean we need an invasion of Iraq to ensure the oil that lubricates it all.

So this column is about food, the heart of my life — and yours. It's a personal food manifesto. You might call it 'How to be a Moral Omnivore'.

1. Place skull and cross bone symbols on all packs of frozen carrots.

I have never met a frozen carrot that I've liked, except in a frozen (home made) carrot cake. NOTHING makes frozen carrot taste good or even remotely like carrot, not even basting it with green tomato relish that performs miracles even on hunks of otherwise tasteless chilacaote melon and elderly chokos.

So how come they are sold, served and eaten when even apart from the total lack of sweet carrot flavour they have a weird rubbery and unpleasant texture? Why the vast frozen carrot profits?

Because as a society we have a low opinion of veg. Veg are a side dish, eaten just because they are healthy, not because they make us salivate, to accompany meat or rice or pasta. Serving frozen carrots to kids is especially heinous. Teach your kids what good food tastes like, so they never accept second best fast food — or frozen carrots — and know that if they don't like boiled broccoli there are 1,000 other less sulphurous ways to eat it.

Life is too short to waste a calorie, especially on frozen carrots.

2. Learn to grow and cook vegies.

Wheat, rice, meat — the great world food staples — are responsible for most agricultural crimes as well, be it soil loss, agribusiness or pesticide use.

Vegies can be grown anywhere — in schools and preschools, along footpaths. Veg can be a niche crop — even though most are grown as broadacre ones. Most suburbs have quite enough space for enough veg to feed their inhabitants — once you get rid of lawns. Imagine a footpath lined with rows of silver beet, that everyone could pick (then wash) as they wanted. You can even grow veg by the windows in your office — try a window box of micro-greens or trail chokos down to the office below from a pot. You don't even need to own land to grow vegies — try community gardens or sharecrop a neighbour's large backyard. But also learn how to base meals on vegies — not just as a sauce for the pasta — onions baked in cider; potatoes slowly stewed with artichokes; leeks baked in oil and garlic; cubes of sweet potato fried with silver beet, garlic and ginger; eggplant tempura ...

3. Plant at least three fruit trees a year — even if they are on the footpath or at the local school.

4. If you eat meat choose niche meat — never lot-fed or factory-raised meat, but meat from chooks fed on scraps, geese that graze your lawn or, even better, feral animals that need to be controlled — see below.

Most animals raised for meat in Western societies contribute to an ecological blight, especially anything lot-fed, like beef, industrialised hens or pigs, fish farms that need four tonnes of wild fish to produce one tonne of farmed fish ... or even crocodiles farmed on chicken carcasses. But it doesn't have to be that way — free range hens that scratch around the yard one minute, and are in the pot the next (if you are a very, very good chook dispatcher and plucker, anyhow) without even a second of fear.

Vegetarianism isn't necessarily an ecological virtue — though eating much less — and different — meat certainly is. (Vegetarianism may be a spiritual or even a social virtue — but that's different).

It often makes more sense ecologically to imitate peasant cultures, and raise hens, pigs, guinea pigs, rabbits, guinea fowl, goats or fish to dispose of weeds and waste, and provide small amounts of meat to be eaten as flavouring or on rare feast days.



A giant goanna in amongst Jackie's mint and salvias, hoping for some feral goat.

5. Eat feral animals — because large hunks of our country are vanishing into feral gullets and under feral feet.

Twenty-five years ago our gorge was dry rainforest — a canopy of Backhousia trees, maidenhair ferns, sandpaper figs, tree ferns. And then a hobby farmer released his goats into the gorge — the price for goat meat had plummeted and he didn't want to pay to take them to the market.

Now the once green gullies are orange desert. And the plague of goats is growing, changing the bush to parkland, all tall trees, the young ones nibbled to death, and then to bare eroded earth. And when the big trees die there will be none to replace them and the bush will die, just as the shrubs, the orchids and the hundreds of other species that have been lost to the goat's browsing teeth.

And it's happening right across Australia. Feral goats, pigs, rabbits, carp, cane toads — okay, I'm not advocating we eat cane toads (though maybe a frogs', er, toads' leg industry might be investigated) but they do make interesting leather.

I don't like killing things. I would much rather the government put back all the research dollars the Howard government slashed from the biological control programs into contraception (instead of a lethal disease) for feral goats, rabbits *et al.*

But at the moment those animals are munching away the world I love. And the most humane way of controlling them isn't to trap them and truck them — crammed and terrified — to a distant market, where they may well be sold for meat anyhow, but to get a professional shooter to kill them with one (repeat ONE) swift bullet. (If a shooter needs more than one bullet to kill an animal instantly they shouldn't be out there). And a way to both fund this and get rid of more meat than crows and goannas can deal with is to eat the meat.

There are lots of other feral animals — almost certainly some in your backyard, if you count pigeons, sparrows, Indian mynahs, starlings, snails — all edible if you know how to prepare them.

Repeat: I don't like killing anything either. But there ARE humane ways to kill things ... if we care enough.

PS: If anyone wants to eat me after I'm deceased, I recommend a long slow simmer (some bits will be pretty tough), with marjoram, garlic and basil, lots of onions — and the scraps go to the chooks.

Perhaps we also need a law that says you must eat anything you kill. It might cut down on road kill.

6. Become truly omnivorous.

Avoid food prejudices. We are omnivores — look at our teeth. We have tearing, chewing and grinding ones. We



A white mulberry tree, like this one in Jackie's garden, is a great gift for your local school or preschool — long sweet fruit that won't stain hands or clothes on a low-maintenance drought-hardy tree.

(Photo: Jackie French)

can suck, lap, sip and guzzle. We have the least specialised mouths on the planet.

Look at what we DON'T eat — is it rational? Aztecs pressed together mozzie eggs to make a sort of caviar. Grilled locust abdomens (another pest that needs controlling, due to overclearing and overspraying) are a damn sight more tasty than most factory-made snack foods. How many of our pests — from silverfish to termites — would no longer be problems if we ate them, as other cultures do?

As natural omnivores we need to be reasonably cautious in case new foods kill us. Kids need to be given

a new food about 10 to 14 times before they like it, which makes sense. (And breast-fed babies are naturally more omnivorous.) But we're becoming a supermarket race — we only eat what's on white styrofoam trays covered in plastic. There is a heck of a lot of good food out there — from broccoli stalks (peel them then stir fry with a touch of ginger and garlic) and baby radish leaves to fish cheeks — that most of us avoid.

7. Think about whether a food is morally good or not — and it usually isn't simple. Those snow peas may be organic, but have they been flown from China? Or sent by boat — in which case they may have a smaller carbon



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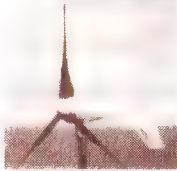
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footprint than the 'local' potatoes that have travelled 200 km by truck. Have they been grown in California with subsidised petrol using illegal migrant labour paid less than starvation wages? Or has the land they've been grown on been recently cleared, killing the wildlife that lived there?

8. Don't avoid a food just because MOST is created immorally. Just find good sources instead.

MOST eggs are produced in foul factories. But SOME eggs are laid — and eaten by humans — with the hens leading happy, fulfilled lives, raising some of their eggs for chickens. MOST meat in the USA is raised by penning animals in feedlots and feeding them grain. MOST meat here is from animals transported in horror and killed with despair ... but it is possible to raise grass-fed happy animals that can be humanely killed on the spot, then placed in refrigerated vans. It's also possible to find cheese from genuinely contented (as opposed to the advertiser's version) cows or goats or sheep, that hasn't been made with rennet.

MANY hunters wound animals and leave them to bleed and die in terror. But others can kill a feral animal with one shot from far enough away, so they die still with the grass in their mouths before they even feel a twinge of alarm.

9. If you're going to kill something, find a recipe first — even if it's the grubs on your cauliflowers. Or feed it/them to your chooks.

10. Forget about rice unless you live in a high rainfall area and have a neighbouring rice paddy.

11. Buy bread from a small local bakery where the baker cares about where they buy their flour and grains.

12. No manufactured breakfast cereal or sliced bread in a plastic coffin counts as food.

13. Never pay more for a meal than the waiter earns a day ... though you can cheat here and give the waiter what your meal cost, too.

14. Never refuse a meal given with love, even if it conflicts with all of the above. There is too little generosity in the world to shun a skerrick. This includes your grandma's roast lamb, or even the nasty supermarket cheese cake she raced out to buy you.

15. And despite all of the above, too — don't feel guilty. Just do what you can.

Food should be a joy, not a chore. It's the loss of joy that's the problem with the way we eat and grow and obtain our food now. We have mislaid the challenge and comradeship of the hunter, the laughter and gossip of the gatherer, the communion of many women in a kitchen making bread or stirring the pots.

Life should be GOOD, damn it. It is possible to live a good rich life with a small global footprint ... probably an even more fulfilling life than you'd live spending your holidays in Thai resorts and leaving a footprint as large as a yeti's. We just have to show the world how.

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The Grunt-Free Electric Shopping Cart

Carting stuff uphill. It's always caused headaches — and muscle aches. Peter's solution could be the cheapest, and most eco-friendly, yet devised.

by Peter Pedals

Nimbin, New South Wales

I know that there are many people living in the hills around Nimbin who regularly have to carry all their groceries and other purchases up steep slopes. The same may apply to hilly rural areas all over Australia. It is frequently not for the sake of getting themselves home, but to get their shopping home that people would put down concrete strips and/or purchase a four-wheel-drive vehicle. There is a much cheaper alternative, one that helps us become independent and less reliant on fossil fuel corporations.

I was approached by a friend, who knew about my experimentation with pedal/electric transport, about using an electrically-powered bicycle to carry shopping up a steep hill. I pointed out that her hill was too steep to cycle

up, that a bicycle is not the most appropriate device to carry a lot of shopping, and that walking next to it whilst trying to balance it and assist it up the slope is very awkward. I suggested that an electrically-powered two-wheel cart that you walk behind would be much more appropriate, and so I built two prototypes to prove to myself that the idea is indeed viable. I have used two 26-inch mountain bike wheels on each cart and an aluminium frame with a 12-volt battery, and either one motor that powers only one of the two wheels or a motor to drive each wheel. I designed the carts to hold a large black plastic chest with hinged lid, which is available from both Supercheap and was also available from Bunnings. This chest will carry pretty much everything that will fit in a boot of a small car. I also managed to get a black plastic wheelbarrow-type tray to fit on it for carrying rocks, soil and even a lawnmower.

I have tried it out and found that I could carry quite



Peter takes his prototype for a test drive.

large loads up a steep hill without a huge amount of effort. Large rocks, ditches and very long grass on the track still present a problem, especially with the single-wheel drive. We decided to cut the tall grass to see how much difference short grass makes. In this instance it was easiest to push the mower down hill to widen the track, but hard to drag the mower all the way back up the hill. Of course, the shopping cart could even carry a lawnmower up the hill when the lawnmower's own wheels are too small to easily push up a rough track.

Comfortable walking speed

The trick with the powered handcart is that it must be propelled at a comfortable walking speed using a motor designed to propel a bicycle at a fast running speed. Using a 24-volt motor, I thought a good start would be to supply it with 12 volts instead of 24. But this was not enough, the gearing needed to be much lower than for a bicycle. From a company called Eazyride you can purchase a 42-tooth freewheeling chain ring (sprocket). I got two of these and two 52-tooth chain rings from bikes I got from the tip. I bolted the 52-tooth chain rings onto the 42-tooth chain rings and mounted these onto the wheels. The thread on them is the same as on the standard bicycle clusters. The 250-watt bicycle motors were purchased from Oatley Electronics (www.oatleyelectronics.com) and come with a nine-tooth sprocket. With a 12-volt battery this now got it moving at a steady walking pace. I used a circuit breaker as an on/off switch, but the problem with that was that it would start with a jerk. So I decided to make it 24 volts after all and got a 24-volt 500-watt motor speed controller from Oatley Electronics and a lever throttle from Epac (<http://epacpower.com.au>). The controller has a half-speed setting which I employed. I could now go at any speed and start smoothly from a



Peter's arrangement for powering the handcart.

stop. I used two 12-volt 10Ah sealed lead-acid batteries connected in series. Lithium ion batteries would be a lot lighter, but also more expensive.

I am very pleased with my powered handcart. All I have to do is walk behind it and guide it. It will get to places where a four-wheel-drive car won't go, and it doesn't incur the fuel costs, the expensive vehicle maintenance or the amount of road maintenance required from driving a vehicle on a dirt road. And it's a lot cheaper to start with.

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Vanessa Craven & Zdena Schwangmeier, Daylesford

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Reusing Greywater

Lots of people have come to the conclusion that reusing greywater is a smart way to conserve water, especially in this dry continent. Steve went and did something about it.

by Steve Watts

Ashwood, Victoria

Watt a great idea!

You have probably heard it all by now: the grey debate, behind the grey matter, 'round the bend'; so many articles about a very grey topic.

In 1999 the first greywater reuse system was officially recognised and accepted in Australia in Victoria. Finally, you could pump your shower and laundry waste water and put it to good use.

That greywater reuse system is the Wattworks water recycling system.

In 1994 I began to research and develop a reuse option that would be accepted by the appropriate authorities.

It was in one of those moments when I decided the waste water from the shower could be easily reused to flush the loo, an original thought followed by a lot of Yellow Pages research. With the help of Jack Williams (RIP), a domestic plumber and family friend, I set about the world of plumbing dimensions, regulations and guidelines.

I had studied business in the past and the business sharks in it, and felt confident and brazen as I set out with my new business associates. Electricians, plumbers, designers, marketers, mould makers, tank makers and a myriad of suppliers who would help me to take this new concept to the people via exhibitions and rural shows around Victoria.

According to attendance figures, 800,000 people had an opportunity to see a new way of reusing their own water between 1995 and 1998.

"Who wants to save f*#n water anyway?"

This was said to me at the HIA home show in Melbourne 1996.

I had hoped for a better response from the government. Jeff Kennett, of the Victorian Government at the time, had an agenda to privatise (nice word for sell) the water supply chain, so recycling and reuse would cause a few small hiccups in their accounting processes.

It all came together in June 1999 when representatives from the EPA, DHS and PIC met with me and agreed that the few innovations I had set out would ensure backflow prevention and the closed loop system was an acceptable method of reuse that would require no council approval.

This was a win for simplicity, and literally thousands of litres would be saved and reused in every case.

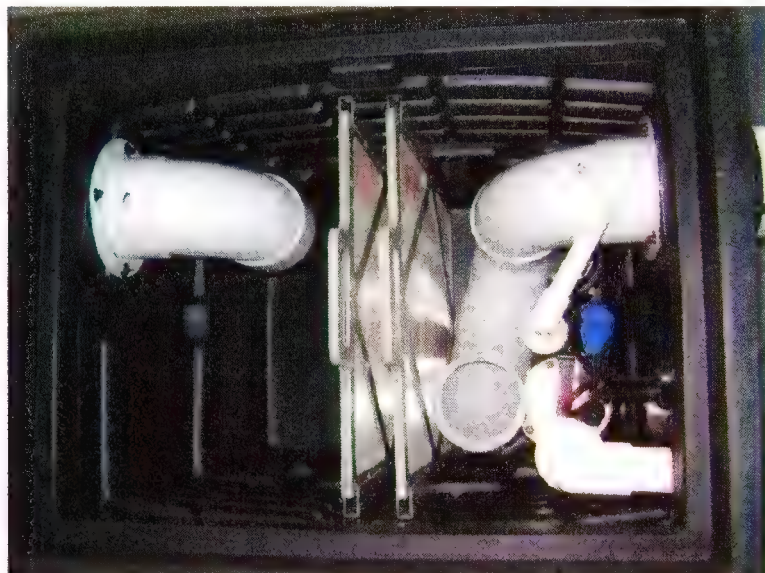
It was and is always a plumber's job to intercept a drainage outlet, but there are a variety of plumbers and types of plumbers. The recent development of the green plumber training and accreditation system has spread this information effectively and broadly.

Plumbing fixtures and fittings need to be constructed to last, and our quality standards ensure longevity, hygiene and efficiency. After trialling several prototypes it was evident that to last, the new system needed to be of an industrial grade and of quality components that were easy to clean.

The robust Smartpit has been designed for plumbers, who do most of the installations. The large filter area, which allows finely-filtered greywater to be distributed to subsurface irrigation, means less time cleaning.

Its operation is controlled by two separate pumps, one purging daily and the other pump delivering to the garden when required. So shut down is simply done with a flick of a switch and the purge pump will continue its daily purge set on a simple timer switch.

There are a few versions of the Smartpit that are available across the country via Reece



The system is built to last, using industrial-quality components.

Plumbing stores and a range of wise distributors. Also available is a range of accessories, spare parts and upgrades available for the watermarked (Lic. No. 60026) Smartpit.

It is an economical as well as smart choice that does take the pressure off our potable water supply.

Melbourne's protected catchments do make it one of the better water supply systems in Australia, when it rains! Like a water tank, it's no good for your garden if it can't be filled.

"Reuse is real conservation and replaces the need for fresh water."

Roll on 2008 and watt a ride: TV, radio, press, 2003 Savewater award, MBA environmental building award, and now some 30 other greywater reuse options.

And it hasn't really rained much in the last 14 years and by now, most who care seem to have a water tank, and are busy catching some of the rain for themselves.

Think forward about the result if the same energy, effort and dollars were put into reusing water rather than catching it. (The water is probably required by the subterranean aquifers anyway!)

And imagine for a minute: the average home produces 100 000 litres of greywater annually! 100 000 litres over nine years times the number of households in Australia. I don't know how many swimming pools or Sydney Harbours that is, but it's a lot.



The Smartpit has been designed for plumbers, who do most of the installations.

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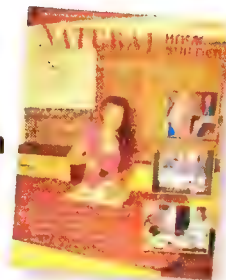
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Volume three of the wildly-popular book *Natural Home Builder* is hot off the press and is available from late June from newsagents, bookshops or direct from The Good Life Book club (phone (03) 5424 1814 to order or visit www.goodlifebookclub.com). In this extract from NHB3, 23 year-old first time owner-builder, Tane Thomas from Hobart, describes how he saved more than \$10,000 by sourcing recycled Tassie oak floorboards and laying them himself.



Guilt-Free Timber Floors

As an owner builder, laying his own recycled floor boards was undoubtedly the most satisfying part of Tane's first time owner-building project. He also saved \$10,000 into the bargain. Here he shares what he's learned.

by Tane Thomas
Claremont, Tasmania

IF you're an owner-builder, renovator or contracting a new project, it's time to start considering recycled timber flooring. Now is an exciting time in the building industry because there are accessible companies selling rustic floor boards and re-machined boards from pier beams, old buildings and the like.

We all know that our precious natural resources are being seriously depleted. This is a national problem. Roughly 670 areas the size of the Melbourne Cricket Ground are logged in Australia every day. Many in the building industry claim that the construction sector's forestry footprint is minimal. However, in Tasmania forestry practices mean that to gain access to a single old growth sawlog, nineteen others are sent for woodchips. I fail to see how this is at all sustainable so I am choosing to make a

statement by using recycled timber flooring. You can too.

Just Old Flooring

The company I chose was Just Old Flooring in Melbourne (www.justoldflooring.com.au). I bought Tas Oak for \$34 per square metre. Tas Oak is an umbrella term for a mixture of similar-looking eucalypts such as stringybark. These are beautiful boards and it worked out to be cheaper than buying newly milled timbers. I had a particleboard floor already down, so the timber was laid on top like a floating floor. Because of this I needed glue to stick the timber down. Just Old Flooring was able to sell this to me, all up costing \$500 per 90 square metres of flooring. I recommend asking the freight company you use for a truck with an arm suitable for unloading the boards which are likely to come in one tonne packages. Otherwise you will have to pay by the hour while you unload the timber by hand. My friend Ben and I worked like mad men to unload



Below: to anchor the ratchet straps Tane drove 100 mm bugle screws into the floor joists, as close as possible to the plasterboard walls.



Tane used ratchet straps to clamp his boards together

three tonnes of timber in under an hour while the driver watched on.

Once you take the shipment it is important to store the timber inside the building: this ensures the timber acclimatises to the interior conditions. Why is this important? Because the average humidity inside is much different to outside, so acclimatising the boards will minimise movement when they are laid. The timber will naturally expand in winter and contract in summer, so seasoning will provide for a neater finish. Leave the timber for a few weeks. This is a wonderful excuse to go to Vanuatu and drink some Port Vila Mai Tais like I did.

Gluing the boards before final positioning.





Tane ended up doing each room in about four hours.

Start your floor by cutting, gluing and nailing three rows of boards. Spread the glue in usable widths on the particle board surface with a trowel. If you just leave a small trail of glue down the centre of each board they will have the tendency to bow ten years down the track. Then nail down the line of each joist. We face nailed rather than secret nailed which is easier and arguably a little stronger. As before, make sure your cuts are square and true where the boards butt together. Take time to match the widths of the

Tools

You will need a few tools. I have a beautiful 30 cm (12 inch) mitre saw which was perfect for the job. Your end cuts must be perfect. Some re-machining outfits may end-match your boards which is preferable. I used a nail gun which meant very fast fitting and eliminated the need to punch nails. You will also need a 3 mm notched trowel for the glue, a tape measure, pencil and a hammer to wallop the boards together.

Now that you are relaxed and tanned, it's time for work. This is the most physical work I have done on the building site as most other jobs are more about precision than strength. You will need to be reasonably fit (all those hours in the gym will come in handy now) and you will need a (very) good friend.

The boards are laid perpendicular to the floor joists.

boards in each row. You will have less trouble fitting them together and will have far fewer gaps at the finish.

The most contentious issue with flooring is how to clamp the boards together so they are tight and without gaps. If you have bare joists, use a joist clamp which is available at most hire companies. Because I had already laid the particle board flooring I used the ratchet-strap method.

You will need to drive 100 mm bugle-batten screws into every second floor joist as close to the plaster wall as possible. Ask your local hardware. A corded drill will be powerful enough to drive them. The strap hook goes onto the screw and then the ratchet hook fits over a short off-cut which in turn fits onto the tongue of the last board laid.

Then while one person stands on the off-cut to maintain the appropriate force, you must crank the ratchet until it is as tight as your muscles can give. Our timber was sourced

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from three or four different locations and they didn't all fit together perfectly, so at this stage it was important to use another off-cut and hit the boards together with a hammer.

You can then continue this way — gluing, ratcheting and nailing three boards at a time — until you finish the room and then the house. It really isn't that hard and I find the best way to tackle jobs like this is just to get stuck in. If you start thinking too much you will be standing around at afternoon tea with nothing to show for the day. Initially we were very slow; however, with the things we learned, we ended up taking about four hours per room.

Finishing

To finish the boards, I paid someone \$31 per square metre to sand and finish the floor and they did a very good job. You can sand them yourself; however, I do not recommend this. The sanders you get from hire stores are lightweight with little power. This is a problem because they can jump around and leave grooves in your lovely floor.

You have a few options in terms of finish. I used the environmentally unfriendly polyurethane option which is used on basketball courts. There are water-based alternatives which won't ruin your lungs and they are more prone to damage, but easier to fix. If I were building my ultimate, dream home I would go for this option. I estimate that I saved about \$55 per square metre — about \$10,000 — by laying the floors myself.



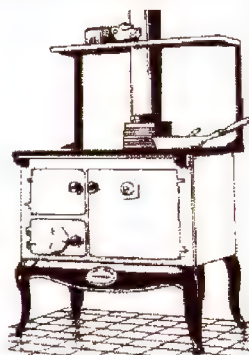
Good luck and never get too upset about mistakes and the like: it's a recycled floor and any imperfections merely add character.

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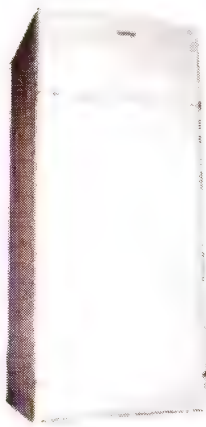
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From Araucanas to Transylvanian Naked Necks, Alanna welcomes your queries about living with chooks. Write to Earth Garden, PO Box 2, Trentham, Vic, 3458 or email info@earthgarden.com.au.



by Alanna Moore
Castlemaine, Victoria

Hello chookies,

Judging from some of the letters I get, it seems there's a whole lot of bad behaviour happening out there in chookydom. It's the dreaded Pecking Order and it really does seem very cruel to observe. But flocks of fowl who are all raised together will rarely have a harsh word between them.

However when you introduce new birds into a flock, all hell can break loose. The bossy ones have to go all-out at asserting themselves at every opportunity until their dominance is accepted by a mere nod of the head when passing others. They can be pretty violent until then. But it usually only lasts until the new order is established.

In factory-style commercial fowl operations the flock sizes are so huge that birds are under constant stress from the Pecking dis-Order. Normally birds can only recognise up to about 50 other individuals. Which is why the tips of their beaks — a highly sensitive area — are routinely sliced off, causing sometimes lifelong pain. It's to stop them from pecking each other to death as a result of the stress they are under.

When you raise a clutch of chickens of the same age they will all usually get on famously. So your second generation birds are always more settled, contented and friendly to keep.

If you do introduce new birds, birds of the same type and colour scheme will get on all the better than different looking or different varieties of fowl. And when keeping different pure breeds, they are best housed separately, especially when breeding them.

Savage chicken

Dear Alanna,

Last week I introduced three new point-of-lay chickens to the hen house. The older resident was the last of the four I had before. She is still laying and in really good condition, and it was pretty obvious she was going to be the boss. (The last bossy hen had decided to start crowing, a problem solved rather abruptly by a visiting Jack Russell terrorist on Christmas Day.) As we live on a suburban block, we had been going down after dark and putting her under a laundry basket so that she could not get the right posture to crow until a more reasonable time for the neighbours. Luckily we didn't need to leave them, as I can just imagine asking our neighbour to creep into the dark hen

house and put the chickens to bed!

I have been putting plenty of food down for them in separate bowls. There are two separate roosting areas and they get out for a couple of hours every day. I thought the older one should have some company, but now she has savaged one of the new girls!

Many thanks. Wendy Austin, Brisbane.

Hi Wendy,

This is a preventable problem, if you use the right strategy. It's never good to mix together new birds with old willy-nilly. Ideally one replaces a whole flock at a time, with birds of the same age, so that this sort of behaviour doesn't rear its ugly head. They will no doubt eventually sort out who is who in the new pecking order. Otherwise keep the old bird in a separate area, or get rid of her.

More savagery

Hi Alanna,

I have been appreciating your articles in *Earth Garden* magazine since joining about eight months ago, all the while feeling a little smug at the fact my chooks have been problem-free since their initial purchase eight months ago.

Unfortunately I now have a problem and was hoping you could offer a little help. I have four Loman Brown hens purchased at point-of-lay. They have a nice run, plenty of good food and produce three to four eggs per day. Up until now they have been perfect; however, one hen has started pecking another, seemingly encouraging the other two hens to do so as well. She chases her away from the feed and prevents her from entering the coop for the night until finally letting her in. The unfortunate hen does not fight back and sometimes just crouches motionless with head on the ground and takes a beating.

This may not happen if there was a rooster in the house but as I live in Brisbane roosters are not allowed. I would appreciate any suggestions. Regards, Lyall Gamble.

Hi Lyall,

The pecking order can be brutal! But usually things settle down when everyone knows who is the boss. You may need to provide separate feeding areas and entrances to the coop in the meantime.

You may also need to up the protein rations, so that everyone is getting the correct nutrition. Those high-laying hybrid breeds need a high-quality feed input to create their

high egg output. (Why people don't go in for the more laid back old heritage pure breeds I don't know!)

Too much moulting

Dear Alanna,

Would you know what is happening to my black Standard Frizzle? She came to me with two Silver-laced Wyandottes and joined my three Isa Browns. All get along well, roosting, grazing and feeding together no worries. In late December she started to lose her feathers and this has continued. She is very bare in a lot of patches. She is still laying, eating and behaving normally. I have observed them and can find no evidence that she is being pecked. We have dusted for lice many times. Of the six she is third in the pecking order. They are free range, just locked in to roost at night.

Any ideas would be appreciated. Leonie.

Leonie,

It does sound like an excessively long moult. Moulting is usually an annual occurrence, around autumn. But it can also be triggered by shock or deprivation of food and water. Whatever the cause, you could start by treating the symptoms. Feathers need lots of protein to regrow and the amino acids in linseed (aka flaxseed) are particularly beneficial. That and dried and powdered seaweed or nettles added to feed could provide the necessary nutritional boost. You can always give it to all of them to keep feeding time simplified.

More on mega eggs

Hi Alanna,

I was just reading the Dec-Feb issue of *EG* and came

across the letter about the mega eggs. We are also getting mega eggs like Belinda's. At first we thought it might have been the old turkeys, but not now.

Our chooks free-range during the day, they get fresh wheat and cracked sorghum (we live on a grain farm) and they have their own vegie forage patch, plus I add shell grit regularly and they are wormed regularly too.

So I think there may be more to this mega egg thing. Most of my hens are first time layers with a couple in their second year. We're thinking of building a trap nest to find who is responsible. Do you have any other ideas why we are getting mega eggs?

Regards. Sam, Queensland.

Sam,

I think your trap nest is a good idea, especially in the light of what Phil has to say

on the subject, below. Good luck!

Dear Earth Garden,

I was flicking through a recent edition and noticed on the chook pages that someone had written in about a hen laying larger than usual, and somewhat distorted looking, eggs.

We had a chook laying similar eggs and not knowing much about the ways of all things chook we were off to the vet (much to the amusement of my farmer brothers-in-law) with bird and egg in hand. The advice from the vet was that it was some sort of internal inflammation (and blockage) of the reproductive tract and we needed to get her off the lay by stressing her (excluding water and food for 48 hours).

As an aside, he kept the egg as it was a fantastic example of the symptoms of the condition. We did what we were told and it seemed to work for a while at least. A few



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It's never good to mix together new birds with old. It's better to replace a whole flock with birds of the same age.

months later she was laying the 'turtle shell' eggs again. Within a few days, she was looking rather ill and one night I thought there was a cat in the chook pen with all the noise that was going on in there. By the time I got out to check her she was dead.

So, my advice would be to try to identify the bird and do something a little more proactive before it meets with a sad and painful demise.

Sincerely, Phil O'Donnell.

Hi Phil,

Thanks for giving us this pointer, Phil. As I keep telling readers, I am no expert on fowl diseases (yet they keep throwing the difficult questions at me!) You were lucky that the vet knew something about it, although he couldn't offer a cure. The standard treatment would be an axe to the neck, before the condition proves too painful.

Permaculture chooks

Hi Alanna,

My name is Fran Edwards and I am a permaculture designer for Jim Penman, the owner of Jim's Mowing. Ron Hora and myself have just completed a permaculture orchard at Jim's home, consisting of varieties of apples, plums, pears, nectarines, cherries, mandarines, peaches, apricots, grapes, berries, herbs, clover, sunflowers, lots of acacias, two duck ponds draining into swales running along trees, with wormwood for chooks, nasturtiums and much, much more.

Also living in the orchard are 40 chooks, ducks and soon geese; all these animals are in heaven. The nest boxes are our own design; the rainwater tank has a self-filling pipe for chooks, so they always have fresh water; plus there's so much more I could explain ...

Enough about the orchard. Jim has decided to start this as a new division in the company, so we can create these gardens in suburban yards. We designers want to help everyone share the fantastic experience of back to basics gardening with the benefits of fresh food.

So keep your eyes open for the trailers on the road and the site can be viewed now at www.jimspmaculture.com.au.

We are now in the process of turning an in-ground swimming pool into a fish pond filled with barramundi that is connected to tanks with herbs and vegies (aquaponics, it's called), plus a worm farm, so this also will be available for the everyday yard size as well.

In the past I worked for two different chook farms, one for breeding and one for supermarket eggs and the

go is to turn every chook or egg farm into a permaculture one — it's a bird paradise, with healthier food for us, plus the dollars saved and the satisfaction.

So I agree with your last column. Come on everyone — let's push the permaculture egg.

Thanks for your time. I look forward to your reply.
Fran Edwards and Ron Hora.

Hi Fran,

That sounds like a mighty wholesome new business venture. I hope it is as successful as Jim's Mowing has been. And it's a natural and timely progression. In view of the prevailing drought in the south of Australia, lawns really ought to be outlawed! No-one can justify the environmental expense to keep them alive, the water and chemicals they guzzle. People who are still maintaining the 1950s dream home lawn are asleep at the wheel.

Let the kids play on some plastic turf or pavers instead of suburban lawns of obscene green. But if people insist on having grassed areas, better for the environment are the elegant native grasses that don't need so much water or care. Kangaroo grass, Panicum and Poa are not only gorgeous, but may also provide some bush tucker feed supplement value to your fowl.

Jim's new permaculture garden sounds so idyllic ... one would imagine that people might want to go and live in with the chooks in such a space! Which reminds me of the wonderful garden allotments that I saw along the railway lines in south-western Poland last year. A jungle of trees and shrubs dripping with fruit, colourful flowers and rambling vines tightly crammed into small plots, and usually sporting a cute little summer house tucked in amongst it all, where people can be close to nature, enjoy its beauty and

eat the bounty.

So I hope the new enterprise does fantastically well and creates a bold new fashion in garden design across the country. Let the permaculture gardens be lush and messy with biodiversity. Never dull, with swanky swales and fantastic fowl strutting about — the perfect fashion accessory! Bring it on!

Chooks disturbing the peace

Dear Alanna,

We live in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne and we have three chickens (big red ones — not sure of their breed) in our backyard. We absolutely adore having them, as they each lay for us an egg each day and eat up our kitchen scraps, except for one problem. Since we bought them at the age of 16 weeks, about two months ago, we have been experiencing early morning squawking a couple of mornings per week. This used to be a daily event, and if we don't go out to shoosh them up they won't stop for about 10 to 15 minutes. But sometimes they start up at 6 am and it's our morning wake-up call, a bit earlier than we would like! It's usually the same one or two that start up and it's quite loud, considering that our neighbour's bedroom window is next to the fence where their coop is, and this makes us extra anxious to get up and quieten them down.

The reason we are writing to you is to find out if this is common with chickens, when it is they squawk and if there's anything we can do to discourage it. It's caused a complaint to the council and a subsequent visit of course. We were reassured that we are complying with all council regulations and the chickens are far away enough from the fence and the tall hedging trees are an extra buffer for the neighbours.

We look forward to hearing from you soon. Thanks Alanna. Kind regards, Tas and Kristy Strydis.

Hi there.

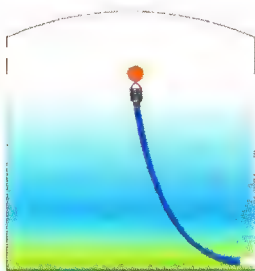
Noisy fowl are often a contentious subject in one's neighbourhood. You may be complying with by-laws, but if you don't want to cause sleep deprivation and tension in the neighbourhood you will have to either swap your hens for another breed (mute swans perhaps?) and see if that works, or, better still, do some sound insulation on their home.

In this case a small strawbale chook house would be ideal to make for them, its entrance small and not pointed towards any bedroom windows. Just stack up hay or straw bales, a couple of them high, and add corrugated iron to the top as a roof, which is then covered with biscuits of hay stacked diagonally. This should last them a few years before it needs replacing. Happy sleep-ins!



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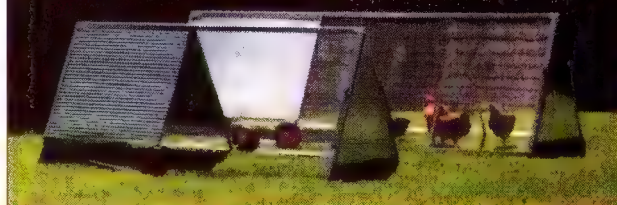


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Digging Our Way to Freedom



What is it that makes an Earth Gardener? Mature reflection? Books? Coming across *Earth Garden* magazine? For Scot it may have had something to do with his childhood. We are delighted to present a series of Scot's 'back verandah musings' in the next few issues of *Earth Garden*.

by Scot Gardner

Churchill, Victoria

WHEN I was growing up, I wanted to be an Aborigine. There was nothing complex or political about it; I was a kid. Dad took long-service leave in 1975 and we spent a wet season splashing in mud puddles in far north Queensland. We played with these kids who had the whitest teeth, the most infectious smiles, who could catch crabs with their feet and had the biggest families I'd ever met. Their whole life was like our holidays.

When we eventually made it back to the suburbs of Melbourne, the world seemed like it had shrunk. The cat climbed the variegated pittosporum in the backyard and left little landmines for us in the sandpit Dad had built underneath. I remember how disgusting it was to find one but the smell I remember most about the sandpit came from next door.

The Velonis were Italian and they kept chickens and pigeons. The cages were kept spotlessly clean and the smell was not a bad smell. It was the sweet dusty aroma of feed seed. Mr Veloni mixed his own seed and kept it in forty-four gallon drums just outside the cages and hearing the lid scrape as it was coming off the drum would send me scurrying up the back fence to watch. Mr Veloni was a gruff man. He had kids my age but he was as wrinkled as a grandpa. He didn't smile or talk much but he always had time for me. He let me in his yard and introduced me to his powder-white chickens. He let me feed them and I still have an undeniable compulsion to run my fingers through piles of seed.

The cages were always clean because in Mr Veloni's eyes the birds didn't produce poop, they produced gold in

the form of fertiliser that he composted and used to feed his garden. They had a lawn in the front yard but the backyard was all concrete paths and beds arranged like long fresh graves. Even under the Hills hoist. The soil was pitch black and bare at the start of spring but a few weeks later couldn't be seen under the tomato plants, aubergine, artichokes and rows and rows of onions, basil and sweet corn.

Making vegies look easy

Mum had grown up in the inner suburbs; Dad came in from England when he was seven. Between them they had as much garden knowledge as the cat but still, they grew vegetables. Nobody else in the street did. It wasn't until much later in life that I realised Mum and Dad probably grew vegies because Mr Veloni grew vegies and made it look so easy.

Mum and Dad had a tree-change in the early eighties, a decade or two before it became trendy. I was thirteen. We shifted from the suburbs to the bush. From brick veneer to a log cabin. From fluoridated water to tanks that occasionally ran dry. The cat and the vegetable gardens came with us. They got bigger (well, the gardens did; the cat just got older). We kept chickens and found that foxes ate chickens if there was no fence to keep them out of the yard, even during the day. Sometimes we had to chase the foxes with sticks and they'd skulk off through

the bush with just a mouthful of feathers. We discovered that fertile eggs seemed to produce more roosters than hens and that roosters could be eaten — not only by foxes but by people, too. We grew and ate sheep and cattle and if there's a more potent way to understand our place in the food chain, I don't know what it is. I remembered, again,



Scot's family found that foxes ate chickens if there was no fence to keep them out.



From left: Liam, Shaun (Scot's younger brothers) and Scot on the 1975 trip.

that I wanted to be an Aborigine but as a teenager it was for different reasons. I wanted to be able to hunt with a spear that I had made myself. I wanted to catch crays and fish and be so autonomous and self-reliant that I could disappear up the bush and never have to deal with school or girls or money or anything ever again. Two days of rain usually cut short my adventures with wilderness subsistence, but in those weeks of exploring the creeks and high country I found something more than a token independence.

A job that makes sense

When I did finally face up to the fact that I was never going to be an Aborigine, that I was genetically unqualified, and I started sifting through the concreted world for something I could do for a job that had meaning, it was horticulture that made sense. While I was still at school, I worked my weekends in wild gardens. With my back against the wilderness and my fingers in the soil, I thought I'd found a compromise. Seasons came and went and wherever I laid my hat, green things would grow, not because I was particularly adept or clever but because I felt most secure with things growing nearby. I wanted rich black Veloni soil. I wanted white chickens and seed to run my hands through. I got in trouble with landlords for digging up their lawns on a whim, shared the bounty with them to soothe their souls and eventually found a place I could call my own.

Sometimes, when people talk about gardening, they're talking about exterior decorating as defined by a hundred lifestyle show presenters. Give your lawn a coat of plants and, if possible, never touch it again. Sometimes, in conversation, gardening comes packaged with other things considered simple pleasures, like stamp collecting or scrap booking. I know, for a lot of Earth Gardeners, it's far from simple. Gardens are never complete, even potted ones. They are productive for a month or beautiful for a season and then the world turns and they need to be tended.

They never stay how you leave them for long. If you keep peace with your neighbours (that is, don't plant running bamboo on the fence line or grow pretty ragwort for the flowers) and you keep peace with the authorities (by not growing the things they don't want you to grow), the only rules in the garden are the rules of nature. Where else in our hyper-regulated world do we have that sort of freedom? By their nature, gardeners live for the future — a week until the seeds come up, a month until the romas are ripe, a year until the avocados can be planted, a decade until the woodlot gives us wood and a generation or six until we realise the wisdom in that patience. The garden is where we can still, in any part of our buzzing hyped-out world, interface with nature and remember where we've come from and — hopefully — where we're going.

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The Edible Garden

THE LOVELY POPPY

Valued in the ancient world for millennia, the poppy and its variants still play an important part in modern life, writes *Earth Garden* co-founder Keith Smith.



by Keith Smith

Artarmon, New South Wales

IN Greek legend the god Morpheus slept in a dark cave, surrounded by poppy flowers, so temples dedicated to him were decorated with their flowers. In the Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphosis* (about 8 AD), Morpheus, god of dreams, is the son of Hypnos, god of sleep. The drug morphine, which induces sleep, is derived from his name.

Our newly-born granddaughter Poppy is aptly named, because she sleeps long and peacefully. Her only drug is her mother Melissa's milk. Our Poppy is, of course, as beautiful as any showy garden flower.

Persian, Greek, Roman, Arabian and European physicians and herbalists recorded the medicinal uses of poppies, which from Medieval times were grown and used in monastery gardens.

We grow poppies in our gardens for their delicate, papery colourful blooms, but also for their tasty blue-grey or black seeds, which do not contain any narcotic properties.

"The rustical peasants of Greece glazed the upper crust of their loaves with yolks of eggs, and then bestrewed them with Poppy seeds," wrote the Roman historian Pliny the Elder (79 AD).

Poppy seeds have a nutty flavour and are sprinkled on crusty white bread, bread rolls and cakes — like the Middle European strudel, Swiss roll, or orange and poppy seed cake — or served with melted butter on cooked noodles and as a dessert on fruit pies or baked noodles. Poppy seed used to feed birds is known as mawseed.

In Egypt, poppy seeds were mixed with flour and honey to make sweet cakes. In France, poppy seed is crushed cold for edible oil, called olivette, used as a substitute for olive oil. Second pressings using heat yield red oil, used to make artists' paints.

It has been suggested that the Latin name *Papaver* comes from papa or pap, the soft mush given to babies in which poppy seeds were boiled to induce sleep.

Corn poppy

I was stunned in 1965 when I saw carpets of bright red corn poppies, with other spring flowers, spread among the fallen marble columns of temples on the tiny island of Delos, near Rhodes, which the ancient Greeks regarded as the 'navel of the world'. The English Lakes District essayist John Ruskin must have felt the same way when he picked up a small red poppy on the ruins of the Palace of the Caesars in Rome. He wrote about it in *Proserpina* (1875): "All silk and flame, a scarlet cup, perfect-edged all round like a burning coal falling from heaven's altars."

The corn poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*), a perennial, has brilliant, but dainty, scarlet blooms, usually with a dark blotch at the base of each petal, and soft green indented leaves. They are well named, because *rhoeas* means 'to fall', which the petals do so frequently. They spring up in fields of grain in late summer around the Aegean and throughout Europe.

Corn poppies originate in the eastern Mediterranean and were depicted growing as a plant in an Egyptian tomb painting of about 1000 BC. The Greeks dedicated the poppy to Aphrodite, goddess of love, while the Romans portrayed the goddess Ceres carrying poppies and corn in one hand and a flaming torch in the other.

You can pull up the whole poppy plant when it is a few centimetres high to add raw to salads for a crunchy, metallic taste, or boil the leaves like spinach. The petals were once used as a dye, but huge amounts were needed. Bruised corn poppy petals will relieve the pain of a bee sting.



Allow the pods or capsules to mature and dry on the plant when collecting poppy seed.

Flanders poppy

The corn poppy (*P. rhoeas*) is also known as the Flanders poppy, worn to remember the dead of two World Wars and placed on war memorials on 11 November. This custom was instigated by

Dr John McRae, a Canadian medical officer who tended injured and dying soldiers at a field hospital near Ypres in France in 1915.



Corn poppies spring up in fields of grain in late summer around the Aegean and throughout Europe.

When he saw the red field poppies growing in profusion over the graves and between the trenches, McRae recalled that the god of sleep created the poppy.

He wrote a famous poem containing the words:
*We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

Dying of pneumonia in 1918, Dr McRae asked that poppy flowers be strewn on his grave. Since 1918, artificial poppies have been sold in aid of ex-servicemen and their families.

Shirley poppies

The corn poppy is the parent of many poppy varieties, including the Shirley poppy. It was raised by an English vicar, the Reverend Wilks, of Shirley in Surrey. In the summer of 1880, Wilks noticed that one flower growing at the edge of his garden had petals lined with white margins. He collected seeds and selected their offspring, producing poppies with silky and colourful petals.



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Shirley poppies have large single flowers in many colours, some with two colours, and flower all summer on tall, slender stems.

Opium poppy

The opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*), a hardy annual, is the source of opium, pain-relieving medicinal morphine, codeine and laudanum (tincture of opium) and the addictive and destructive drug heroin. Native to western Asia, from Iran to the Balkans, the opium poppy was probably first cultivated in Greece and Turkey. They produce huge blooms of pure white or shades of scarlet, pink and mauve, with a blue or purple tinge at the base of each petal, and waxy, toothed grey-green leaves.

Opium poppies have been used for medicine and as a narcotic since ancient times. Opium was referred to as a remedy for soothing fretful children in the Egyptian Ebers papyrus of about 1570 BC.

In his *Materia Medica* (60 AD), Pedacius Dioscorides, a Greek physician with the Roman army, described the method used to obtain the gummy latex from opium poppies by making incisions in the green, unripe seed heads without piercing the inside, wiping off the milky 'tears' that "come out with ye finger into a spoon". The congealed and dried substance is raw opium. The same method is used today.

Dioscorides also wrote: "Some is cultivated and grown in gardens, from which the seed is made into bread." Poppy



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In France, poppy seed is crushed cold for edible oil, called olivette, used as a substitute for olive oil.

seedpods or capsules, sometimes mixed with chamomile flowers, were used to make poultices to treat abscesses, wounds and painful swellings. Poppy heads and flowers were boiled with sugar to make a cough remedy.

Charlemagne, King of the Franks and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, issued instructions in 812 AD for *papaver* (poppies) to be planted in his villa gardens.

In his *Herball* (1597), the English surgeon John Gerard mentioned "divers varieties of double Poppies and their colours are commonly either white, red, darke purple, scarlet, or mixt of some of these." Gerard warned that "Opium somewhat too plentifully taken doth also bring death."

There is a story that when Anne Boleyn, mother of Queen Elizabeth I, was about to be beheaded with a sword at the Tower of London in 1536, her ladies-in-waiting comforted her with a syrup made from poppies.

In Australia some 1500 licensed farmers grow opium poppies legally in Tasmania to provide the raw material for medicines. Culinary seed from these poppies, treated to prevent propagation, is sold in shops and supermarkets.

Growing

Poppies are very easy to grow. They will reseed if you let one or two strong plants run to seed.

Sow seeds of annual or perennial poppies in autumn in a sunny spot, in well-drained light soil, enriched with compost or well-rotted animal manure. Add dolomite or sand to clayey soil.

Allow 15 to 30 centimetres between plants. You can safely transplant seedlings when they have four leaves. Shirley poppies are an exception and suffer if transplanted. Sow seeds where they are to grow.

Mulch perennial plants with compost each spring. Plants grow to a height of from 30 cm to one metre or more.

Allow a few poppies to go to seed to attract small birds to your garden. Poppy flowers do not contain nectar, but they attract the bees that collect pollen.

Collecting seeds

To collect poppy seed, allow the pods or capsules to mature and dry on the plant, but harvest them when they are turning brown, before they open and spill the seeds. Dry pods further in the sun on muslin or similar cloth. Remove the seeds by rubbing the pods between your hands. Use a coarse strainer to shake and separate seeds from chaff.

In Turkey, seeds of *Nigella* or Love in a Mist (*Nigella damascena*), an annual plant with dainty blue flowers, have replaced opium poppy seed. The globular, triangular black seeds are sprinkled on bread in the same way as poppy seeds.



Poppy Rebecca Gunnsmith was born on 23 January 2008 at North Shore Hospital in Sydney to Melissa and Jason Gunnsmith. She is about four hours old in this photo with proud grandfather Keith Smith, who founded *Earth Garden* in 1972 with her grandmother Irene. Her mother Melissa Ruth Smith, born on 27 May 1974, was six weeks old in the photo published in *Earth Garden* No. 10 (September 1974).

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Confessions of a Weekend Hippy

— Winter 2008 —



On weekdays an urban worker, a philosophical tree-hugger practising self-sufficiency at weekends, Liz doesn't need much to make her happy, and has devised her own method of uncluttering her life.

by Liz Ingham
Yarraville, Victoria

A couple of years ago, I read an article in the newspaper about a scientist who was working on a method to help people sleep. She said her experiment involved asking participants to think of three things in their day that made them happy, and why, when they turn out the lights. In the interests of science, I gave it a whirl.

You don't judge the things you think of, and don't analyse them. Just remember a happy moment, and ask yourself why it made you happy. Then repeat.

Over the last few years, this has taught me a lot about myself. It's also enabled me to recognise moments of perfect happiness when they occur, which tends to make me happier.

There are patterns emerging. It won't surprise regular readers that nature makes me happy. The scent of leaf litter and earth, and cool humid air, and being in amongst the trees.

But this week in suburbia, the tally has included a glance back at my chipped laminex kitchen bench after I scrubbed it down; walking hand in hand through familiar streets to an early morning yoga class with Trevor; watering little seedlings that were nuzzling through the soil; and the two-second delay in between thinking up a wicked feminist one-liner and writing it down.

So what does this tell me? That I like that 1950s tick-tock biscuit blue colour, I like having a sense of home and community, I like growing vegetables. I like doing things. Trevor is grouse.

Getting a pay cheque and buying things have never turned up on the happy list. I don't want to harp on about advertising and consumer culture, because I've been doing that a bit lately, but sometimes you have to remind yourself who you are and what you want out of life. To be happy. To be healthy. To love and be loved. To care for the Earth.

This helped me to make the decision a bit over a year ago to take a pay cut so I could quit my boring office job and go and work for my local Greens MP. I've had a few enquiries from Earth Gardeners about how that's working out, and I'd like to say thanks for your kind thoughts, and it's working out just fine.



Happiness: the scent of leaf litter and earth, and cool humid air, and being in amongst the trees.

Throw away a thing a day

One of the most radical things you can do in this consumer culture is to own less.

Greenies can be a bit prone to owning a lot of things, not because we're big-time consumers, but because we hate waste and rubbish so much we hate throwing things out.

But the thing is, if you keep something that you rarely or never use it is wasted. Even if it was secondhand when you bought it. Even if it was a gift. And especially if



The Musquee de Provence pumpkins are too big to span with outstretched arms.

Below: pantry shelves stacked like the produce section of the local agricultural show.



someone else might use it.

It's easier to shut the cupboard door and not think about it. If the cupboard gets full, you can always shut the door and get another cupboard, or one of those sets of ugly stackable storage containers to organise everything, because once it's organised, well, that will make it so much more useful. You can carry them with you on life's journey. If you stack them under the bed, they'll even help you gather up a fantastically useful collection of dust right in the place where you sleep.

Last year, during an otherwise uneventful car journey, I came up with the concept of Throw-Away-a-Thing-a-Day-May, as one of a series of rhyming theme months for my household. Of course, it can be done in any month. But it rhymes, see.

We divided up the rooms of the house into four weeks, and each day when we got home, set the timer for 15 minutes and used that time exclusively to throw things out.

There were rules, which we made up as we went along. No cleaning. No answering the phone. No reading. No hesitating. If the thought "This might come in handy" pops into your head, or "That's too good to give away," you have to put that object into the out pile. Genuinely useful or valuable objects went to the op shop, things we really were going to mend were left to one side and the rest was rubbish or compost. After a while it became intuitive. If something gave me a good feeling, it stayed. If it was associated with a bad feeling, then out.

After it was all over, it was a bit like an illusionist's trick. The place seemed half empty, but in fact, everything we needed was still there. It made the place seem calmer, in a way I can't describe in words. It's good to own less. Makes you lighter. I'm never as happy as when I'm bushwalking and I have exactly what I need, and nothing more.

It's really made me think twice about bringing any new possessions into the house, knowing they'll face the same scrutiny each year. I think this is what creates less rubbish: refusing to own stuff in the first place.

The exception

That all made me look really non-materialistic, didn't it? But that's an illusion, too. Take my hand, my friend, and step into the winter larder.

These Musquee de Provence pumpkins are bigger than I can span with outstretched arms, and I have five of them. What do I need five for? I've no idea, but I grew them. Plus seven Queensland Blue, a good half dozen each of Butternut and Bohemian, and we already ate the Potimarrons. If you could take one home, you'd be doing me a favour. They'll only keep until spring.

Here's 76 Vacola jars of preserved organic tomatoes. We haven't bought a can of tomatoes this century.

Over there is Trevor's beer and ginger beer. For moderate drinkers, we seem to own a lot of home-brew. According to Trevor's numbering system, each bottle has been refilled an average of 40 times in the last decade. Single use drink bottles drive us bananas, and this is the alternative: a small brewery in the larder.

Then there's the pickles and jams, lined up in rows of rich yellows, oranges, reds and browns. And bottled pears this year, ah yes, with a little brandy in the syrup.

This is my plenty. Warm clothes on my back and garden beds overflowing with winter salad and spinach, fat leeks enough to share and some solid red globes of beetroot ready for the roasting fire.

If you tried to trade me this wealth for a shiny diamond, I'd think you were crazy.

Great Nana Technology

FRUGAL LIVING TIPS

Recycling Knitting Wool

by Bea McGregor

Porirua, New Zealand

I am a Grandma who knits. Commercial wool has got quite expensive so I have gone back to recycling wool the way my mother did.

Carefully snip and pull the seams of hand-knitted woollen garments (op shop buys or garments you want to use again).

Starting from the top of the knitting, unpull the knitting and wind it into balls. Make skeins of the wool by tipping up a chair and winding the wool around the four legs. Tie in four places and then immerse wool in a bucket of hot water. When cool wring the water out of the wool and dry in the sun. The wool will be wrinkle free.

Ask a willing friend or family member to hold the wool (or put it back on the chair legs) while you wind your as-new wool back into balls.

Soak skeins
in hot water
to make it
wrinkle-free.



Great Nana Technology

Now's the time to send in descriptions of the things gran and grandpa did to be frugal and thrifty — to reuse and recycle. As petrol prices and interest rates go higher, it's the perfect time to share that frugal living tip with other Earth Gardeners. Please post your tip to 'Frugal Living Tip', *Earth Garden*, PO Box 2, Trentham, Vic. 3458, or email it to editorial@earthgarden.com.au

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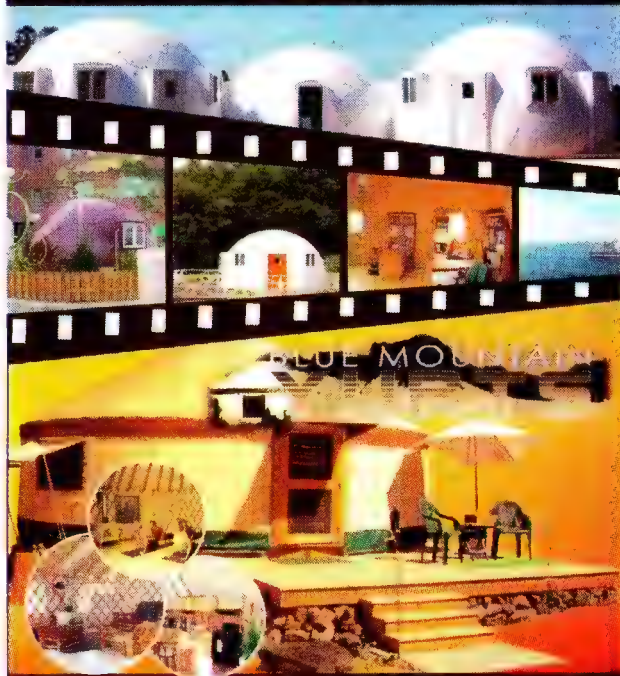
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Using wool for insulation

Hi Bob,

I have collected a fair amount of sheep wool from the handful of sheep we have on our small property. I am now building our house. Can I use this wool as insulation in the roof? Are there any problems such as being a fire hazard, attracting rodents or the lanolin seeping into the Gyprock? If so, is there any easy way to treat it so it can be used? Thanks, Chris.

Dear Chris,

Fleece has some very good qualities. There is a lot of wastage during shearing, and although not suitable for spinning, much of it is clean enough for insulation. It's always a good idea if we can see how we can turn waste into a free, useful resource.

I have used sheep's wool for insulation in a building some 15 years ago, and so far no problems have emerged.

Your concerns are valid all the same.

I put the fleece in bags, which I tied shut. This was in part for ease of handling: putting the bags in place was almost like laying the usual fibreglass batts. But also, it was to reduce the movement of air, and therefore oxygen, next to the fleece.

This building has a cathedral roof. That is, the bags of fleece are tightly sandwiched between lining boards under and the corrugated steel roof over. I placed fire-rated reflective foil both above and below, and sealed all gaps at the top and bottom edges of the roof.

Rodents can get into material like this, because it's a nice place to bring up their babies, but again, this has not been a problem because the whole space is enclosed. Where I have had bags of (spinnable) fleece stored, occasionally the wool has been damaged by the little critters.

If you wanted to use fleece for insulation over a flat ceiling, the fire risk would be greater. If I wanted to do this, I'd treat the fleece with the traditional recipe used for

thatch roofs. This consists of borax, boracic acid and various other substances, the most usual being copper sulphate. This mix is also used to fire-, rot- and vermin-proof shredded paper insulation. I don't know if it has been tried with fleece. Having a complete, taped layer of fire-rated foil both above and below the fleece would be a good idea too. Hope this helps, Bob.

Working model fireplace

Hi Earth Garden,

I'm a year nine student and for my major science project I have chosen to make a working model of a fireplace. The only problem is I have no idea how to go about this! My dad is an extremely dedicated reader and suggested I write to you and ask if you had any information on how to make one (or even where I could find out how to make one). Anyway help would be appreciated. Thanks! Geraldine.

Geraldine,

What an interesting project! I assume that by a fireplace, you mean an open one with a chimney?

Also, I wonder what size your model is to be. Is it something you can carry around, or will it be a fixture, like a fireplace in a cubby house?

In the early days of Australia's colonial settlement, people sometimes made fireplaces and chimneys, although they didn't have ordinary house bricks. If they had cement, they could use local stones. If they didn't, they could use mud as the mortar between stones, but of course this wasn't as durable. In some places, they actually built a clay firebox, and made a chimney from timber and mud. They tied straight saplings together with wire, then coated the inside with a thick layer of mud. The first few fires had to be cool enough to bake the mud without



Fleece from sheep such as this Southdown can be used for insulation if treated properly.

cracking it off, and then they had a working chimney, for a while anyway. All the same, such things could catch fire, so I don't suggest you do something as primitive.

Nowadays, all chimneys and fireplace surrounds are made from house bricks, with a good cement mortar between them. Your problem will be to find bricks small enough. So, maybe you can make them.

It is easy to make mud bricks of any size, including very small ones. Remember, when you bake the bricks they will shrink a lot — 25 per cent is common. So, make them that much bigger.

Next, air-dry them until they are hard. Then bake them in an oven. I can't tell you for how long, because that will depend on the size of the bricks, and on the clay they were made from. If you can, use clay with a high kaolin content. This tends to be grey to white, and very dense. Potter's clay is all kaolin. You can use that, but of course it costs money.

Once you have the bricks, you need a design. Have a look at a few real fireplaces, and copy the brick patterns. If you put your head inside the fireplace and look up, you will see that there is an odd arrangement: a sort of a shelf that restricts the opening, just before the chimney starts. This is called the throat. It ensures a good gas flow, through something called the Venturi effect. You can look that up in a search engine on the web.

After you have constructed your fireplace and chimney, you'll have to give it plenty of time to cure, because if you fire it up too soon the mortar will crack. Then, start with very small, cool fires and gradually build up.

I hope you do know that an open fireplace is actually an inefficient way to use solid fuel like wood. Here are the efficiencies of heating devices:

1. An electric radiator will convert 100 per cent of the electricity it uses into heat. However, this is only about 25 per cent of the electricity generated at the power station, so using electricity for heating is wasteful.
2. A modern gas wall furnace will give you 75 per cent of the energy of the gas as heat. The remainder is used to push the hot waste gases up.
3. If you have a well-designed metal solid-fuel space heater, it can be as efficient. That is, 75 per cent of the energy in the wood



You can increase the warmth from an open fireplace by putting a steel object inside, so it faces the room.

will heat you, while 25 per cent keeps the smoke going up.

4. Unfortunately, a really well-designed open fireplace is not even as good as an electric radiator. The energy you get from it is radiant heat that comes out the front, which is not all that much. You can increase this by putting a steel object inside, so it faces the room. I have seen a big blade from a rotary hoe used like this, and it about doubled the heat output.

The fire also heats up the chimney and nearby walls, and in time this can warm the house. This is why I find it odd that so many fireplaces are on external walls where half this heat is radiated to the outside. If I had to build a fireplace, I'd put it in the corner of four rooms.

In order to keep working, the fireplace needs to suck in air. So, it actually causes a cold draft near ground level, which can make people uncomfortably cool even while they huddle near the fire. The solution is to have an air intake that comes from underneath the hearth. This air feeds the fire, so air from elsewhere in the room is not sucked up into the chimney.

Anyway, have fun with your project. When it is finished, send some photos to *Earth Garden*.
Bob.

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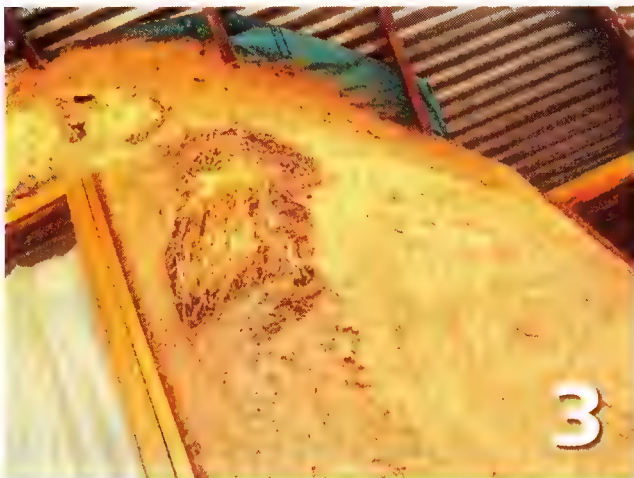
The render applied to strawbale walls can make all the difference between a finish that looks good and keeps water out, and failure. Ben and Lena share some innovative techniques originally developed in Denmark.

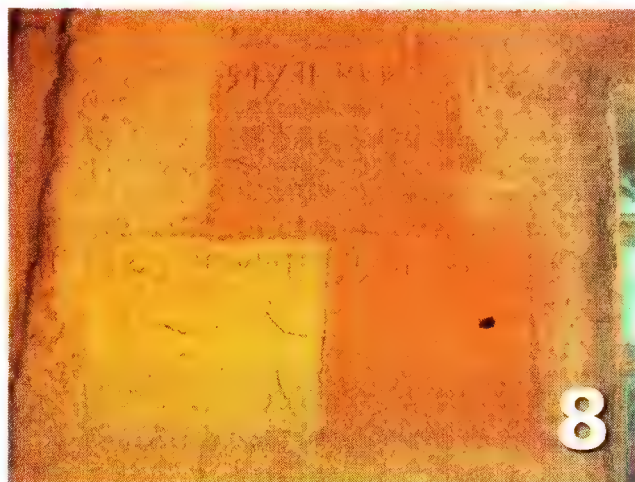
by Ben Aylen and Lena Martin
Mylor, South Australia

WE'VE been interested in strawbale building for almost a decade now, and have been living in our tiny house, which we call 'The Hut' since 2005, even though we're still building it (sound familiar owner-builders?). When we met Tom Rijven and his partner, Sophie Guyot, through mutual friends in Denmark (the international strawbale community is amazing), we immediately started talking about the virtues of strawbale building — ideal climate control due to its fantastic insulat-

ing properties and walls that breathe, very low embodied energy, ease of construction and so on and so on. We also realised that while we know a lot about our way of strawbale construction, Tom has a very different approach, one we wanted to try out. Together we decided to hold a rendering workshop to finish the outside of The Hut.

These 12 photographs will give you a taste of the final two coats in Tom's three-coat rendering system (we had already partially rendered our exterior walls before we met Tom, and had to adapt his system). First we made some body coat, then we prepared render stops, applied the body coat, and made and applied a finish coat to a small section of wall we had body coated prior to the workshop.





1: The body coat

Tom's recipe for the body coat is surprisingly clay rich, and ideally needs to be made one to two days (depending on the climate) prior to use to allow it to ferment. Fermentation is crucial as the resulting lengthening of glucose molecules makes it stronger and more waterproof. Our most invasive weed, Montpellier Broom, said 'ideal body coat material' to Tom, as once mulched it has millions of micro-fibres and ferments quickly. Due to the existing sandy render on our walls, we adjusted the sand to subsoil ratio in our body coat in order to get it to adhere properly.

Body coat recipe

Measured by volume		(Tom's)
Coarsely sifted on-site subsoil	7	(10)
Red plasterers' sand	4	(1)
Water	4-4.5	(4-4.5)
Freshly mulched Montpellier Broom	3	(3)
Cut pea straw	3	(3)
Cut wheaten straw	3	(3)
Starter (pre-fermented broom)	0.1	(0.1)

A word of warning: in earth building, materials are unique, not standardised like cement, so it's crucial that you do your own tests and personalise any recipes. Also make sure your supplier doesn't change sand types mid-construction (like ours did!).

2: Render stops and protection from water

These standard concrete pavers have been glued to the existing foundations (old car tyres rammed with earth) using a very dry clay slip. They provide a good render stop that's well above finished ground level, an exterior 'skirting board', and a clean edge to pave to (anyone want to run a paving workshop for us?!)

3 & 4: Before and after some window detailing.

To create the desired form, Tom's keen eye could see that the existing form needed reshaping, which we did with a claw hammer used like a pick-axe. Then the whole area was thoroughly wet down, a clay slip glue was applied, followed by the body coat (in places up to 15 cm thick) to achieve an elegant form (our existing render can still be seen in photo 4).

5 & 6: On with the body coat

Due to its fantastic strength and stickiness it's possible to really sculpt with the body coat. As it's applied with the hands you literally get a feel for the shape of the wall.

7: Bring back wattle and daub!

Using a thick clay slip mixed with long lengths of straw to form sausages, which are then woven around the light vertical timbers, this unclad stud frame wall was transformed into an earth wall. This method also works very well for joining a strawbale wall to other walling systems.



8: Finish coat testing

Well before the workshop we tested four different sands in different proportions to our subsoil (which we first made into a clay slip and then passed through a 5-mm builder's sieve) to achieve the desired properties of the finish coat (strong, but no cracks). The two samples in picture 8 have two sand to one subsoil, and clearly the washed white concreting sand cracks far more than the washed red plasterer's sand (due to different sizes and shapes of sand particles). The sample on the right (three red sand to



HUFF'N'PUFF CONSTRUCTIONS



Photo: Fairfield Community Hall in Sydney

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one subsoil) shows no cracking, and would make a good final coat (although we ended up choosing a yellow sand, primarily due to its colour).

9 & 10: The marvels of mayonnaise and whipped egg white

As the final coat needs to be waterproof, Tom and Sophie add one part mayonnaise to 60 parts final coat. Yes, mayonnaise, a recipe for which you can find in any good cookbook (10 egg yolks to one litre of oil, with a splash of vinegar, but beware, it's easy to curdle the egg yolks), with raw linseed oil instead of an edible oil. Egg yolks



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help the oil form an emulsion with the water in the finish coat, uniformly dispersing the oil. Finally, the whites are whipped, left to stand, and the liquid (not the froth) mixed in to strengthen the final coat.

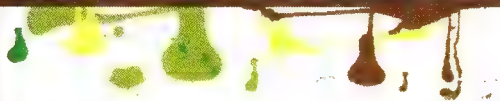
11 and 12: Applying the finish coat — child's play

The finish coat is applied like a conventional render (using a hawk and a steel float). Tom has made an improvement to the conventional hawk: his is larger, with the handle indi-

vidually set so that your personal hawk fits into your inner elbow and the weight is partly taken by your torso. Tom and Sophie's son Elwin shows his style with a tool usually used for fine detailing.

Editorial note. This is a simplified version of Tom's rendering system. More details will be found in Tom's forthcoming book. The English version of 'Between Earth and Straw', published by Goutte DE Sables, is due in June this year.

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Questions & Answers

with Jackie French



If you have a question about anything from peas to possums to perfume, email Jackie at jackief@dragnet.com.au. Sorry, only emails for the column can be answered — already have five boxes of mail (plus silverfish and the occasional huntsman spider) waiting for attention.

Ginger Marmalade recipe

Hi Jackie,

Enjoyed the recent Q&A in *Earth Garden*. Do you have a recipe for Ginger Marmalade? We enjoy the Buderim Original Ginger but wanted to try our own. Thanks, Henry.

How about these? All good, especially the apricot and ginger, which is superb!
J.

Lime and Ginger Marmalade

- 10 limes
- 1 grated ginger root, peeled OR 1 cup chopped crystallised ginger (gives a much chunkier ginger jam)
- 1.5 litres water
- 1.5 kg sugar

Leave the sliced limes in water overnight; drain and cover with fresh water and leave for another twelve hours. Drain, add the water and root ginger if using; boil till the rind is tender then add the sugar and crystallised ginger (if you are using that) stirring well till sugar dissolves. Boil till a little sets in cold water.

Persimmon and Ginger Jam

- Persimmons
- Grated fresh ginger
- Lemons
- Sugar

For every 500 grams of persimmon pulp add 350 grams sugar. Let it stand overnight; add the grated rind of a lemon for every 500 grams of pulp, and the juice with a dessertspoon of grated ginger. Boil till a little sets in cold water — about 45 minutes to an hour.

Apple and Ginger Jelly

1 kg apples (any variety, including crab apples, but red skinned ones give a clear red jelly)

A grated ginger root — don't peel

White sugar

Water

Slice but don't core or peel apples. Add ginger. Cover with water. Simmer till soft. Strain — I bung mine through a strainer, then pour that juice through a clean old stocking — the more finely you strain out the pulp, the clearer your jelly will be. If you want your jelly to be clear and glowing with no cloudiness do not squeeze or push the pulp through — just allow the liquid to drip through. Hanging the jelly bag (whether a pillow case or stocking or whatever) over the container overnight works well. I hang mine from the showerhead above the bath (makes cleaning up relatively simple).

For every cup of juice add 1 cup of sugar. Simmer, stirring often, till a little dabbed on a cold saucer turns into jelly. Pour into clean jars at once and seal.



Ginger.

Incredibly Good Dried Apricot and Orange Jam

- 500 gm dried apricots
- 1 cup orange juice
- 5 cups water
- 8 cups sugar (2 kg)
- Half a cup lemon juice

Simmer apricots in water till soft and starting to break up. (You can soak them overnight to speed this up.)

Now add everything else. Simmer for about an hour till a little sets on a cool saucer. Bottle and seal while still very hot ... and beware if any kids are making this! It is very easy to burn yourself badly making

jam! Don't try it except with a very sensible experienced adult.

Apricot and Ginger Marmalade

This is the one I'm making for my dad for Father's Day ... if Bryan doesn't guzzle it all first. Make the jam as above, then about ten minutes before it's ready (doesn't matter if you add it a bit early) add one or two cups finely chopped glacé ginger, for real ginger lovers, or 1 tbsp chopped glacé ginger if you just want a bit of a ginger tang.

PS: The secret to making this jam is to cook it long and very slowly, just at a simmer — that way it won't catch on the bottom. Do stir it though fairly often towards the end.

A good way to make sure your jam isn't too runny or overcooked is to stop cooking after an hour's simmer, and leave the whole thing to cool down with the lid on.

Now test it. If it's just right, heat till just simmering then bottle and seal.

If it needs more cooking simmer and stir for another 10 to 20 minutes, (your call) then bottle.

Substitutes in Saudi Arabia

Dear Jackie,

My name is Inji Grizi and I live in Saudi Arabia. I found your book *Natural Solutions* some time ago and I started using the recipes in it. Just one dilemma: some of the ingredients are not available here and are not known to me. I am not familiar with the following ingredients and I would like to find some substitutes: sorbolene cream, methylated spirits.

Also, what can I substitute for vodka to make perfumes or eau de toilette? And what can I substitute for

soapwort to make liquid soaps or shampoos? Your assistance would be very much appreciated.

Ms Inji Grizi.



Jackie's dad is getting a superb ginger and apricot marmalade for Father's Day.

Hi ... I'm sorry, there aren't satisfactory substitutes for the ingredients in the recipes you are probably trying to make, or not ones that I know of that are available in Saudi Arabia. The alcohol in the methylated spirits and vodka is used as a solvent, that is, to dissolve other ingredients. There are other plants that have a high level of saponins like soapwort, but I'm not familiar with your local plants so can't suggest any.

There are alternative perfume and hand cream recipes though, which don't need alcohol, but use perfumes dissolved in oils or fats instead, and there are alternative cleaner recipes that don't use soapwort, but are based on ground oats or bicarbonate of soda or finely ground rice.

Fragrant Face Wash

I came up with this one about ten years ago. It cleans well and leaves your skin soft.

1 cup ground rice or ground almonds (or even whole almonds)

1 cup bicarbonate of soda

1 cup rolled oats (this can be made without the oats — but if you don't use oats use only half a cup of bicarb).

Place them in a blender. (Warning: this mixture will scratch the glass of your blender) or, if you have the energy, pound till smooth with a large mortar and pestle. Now mix in 1 tablespoon of your favourite essential oil.

Keep in a sealed jar in a cool place for up to a month.

Throw out if it begins to look or smell different in any way — it has no preservatives.

To use, scoop a little and smear over your wet face. Wash off as usual.

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Ingredients

2 tbsp almond oil

1 tbsp scented oils (I like oak moss, rose and jasmine with just a touch of lemon)

1 tbsp beeswax

Melt the wax in the almond oil (on a low heat — just use enough to let it melt and take it off the heat at once. Warning: hot oil burns!) and add the oils. Mix well and pour into a tiny wide-mouthed jar. (I collect ones that jam and honey come in at hotels — they're the perfect size and shape.)

Put the lid on. To use, rub a little behind your ears, on your wrists, back of the knees, temples, ankles and other hot spots where veins come close to the surface and are likely to be sniffed. You only need a very small amount — it lasts!

Year-round fruit cropping

Dear Jackie,

I've been looking for some information that I thought you may hopefully already have or could point me in the right direction on how to find.

I'm trying to research what trees to plant if I wanted to have fruit cropping all year round on a monthly basis, including citrus, deciduous, berries, tropical and nuts for a temperate climate. Thanks.

Zach Thomas.

Hi ... what crops in your area will depend pretty much on your climate. (I once puzzled an indigenous acquaintance in central Australia by asking when a tree cropped. She looked at me as if I were crazy. "After it rains, of course.")

Our earliest apples crop in late November; others may find the same varieties aren't ripe till late December. But we don't get ripe passionfruit, melons or tamarilloes till late autumn.

You can also extend your growing season by planting early and late varieties — we have oranges, lemons and avocados all year round, for example, by planting different varieties, and apples from November to August. In cold areas it's also worth planting fruit like medlars and loquats that fruit when there isn't much else around. But as a very, very basic guide, based on what fruits here in the southern tablelands of



Winter apples like these Lady Williams (taken by Jackie in her own garden) will stay on the tree until July — as long as you protect them from the birds.

NSW, where it is freezing in winter, hot in summer, here goes.

PS: See also *The Wilderness Garden* (new and very expanded edition out in April), *Backyard Self Sufficiency* and *The Earth Gardener's Companion*.

January

Late cherries in cold areas, peaches, nectarines, plums, late apricots, early apples like Gravenstein, passionfruit in warmer areas, black and white mulberries, gooseberries, early grapes, early almonds, Cape gooseberry, valencia oranges, lemons, Hass avocados, babaco, pawpaw or mountain pawpaw in warm areas, strawberries, mid-season raspberries, loganberries, fruit from flowering prunus (good for jam), red, white and black currants, blueberries, banana passionfruit and mangoes in hot areas.

February

Brambleberries, raspberries, peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots, apples, passionfruit, mulberries, gooseberries, Cape gooseberries, hazelnuts, almonds, grapes, figs, babaco, pepino, pawpaw or mountain pawpaw in warm areas, orange, lemon, avocado, strawberry guavas, strawberries, pears, early melons, tamarillos, and banana passionfruit.

March

Olives, oranges, lemons, cumquats, figs, late peaches, late nectarines, apples, passionfruit, pepino, babaco, pawpaw or mountain pawpaw in warm areas, sapote, mulberries, hazelnuts, almonds, orange, lemon, tamarillo, strawberries, raspberries, brambleberries, early quinces, early persimmons, pears, melons, pecans, bunya nuts, late grapes, and banana passionfruit, and in some areas custard apples, cherimoya, lychees, star fruit, custard apple.

April

Pomegranates, medlars, valencia oranges, lemons, early limes, olives, late figs, quinces, Granny Smith apples, passionfruit, tamarillos, late grapes, chestnuts, walnuts, persimmons, grapefruit, guava, feijoa, strawberry guava, late strawberries, raspberries, bananas, avocados, Irish strawberry tree fruit, melons and pecan, and in some areas custard apples, cherimoyoya, lychees, star fruit and custard apple.

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May

Early mandarins, limes, pomegranates, late apples, late valencias or early navel oranges, tangellos, citrons, cumquats, tamarillos, early kiwi fruit, late passionfruit (high up on the vine), late raspberries, late strawberries (if grown on a high garden away from early frost), olives, persimmons (if the birds haven't finished them), feijoa, bananas, dates, avocados, banana passionfruit, elderberries, medlars, olives, melons, sapotes and guava, and, in some areas, custard apples, cherimoya, lychees, star fruit and custard apples.

June

Apples (Lady Williams), feijoa, navel oranges, kiwi fruit, limes, mandarins, citrons, grapefruit, bananas, avocados, late passionfruit (high on the vine), banana passionfruit, guava, strawberry guava, medlars, olives, late tamarillos (above the frost), a very few late raspberries, and winter rhubarb, and in some areas custard apples, cherimoya, lychees, star fruit, custard apple.

July

Apples (Lady Williams), navel oranges, kiwi fruit, limes, mandarins, citrons, grapefruit, bananas, avocados, tangellos, medlars, alpine strawberries, winter rhubarb, and Cape gooseberries grown in a pot or sheltered spot.

August

Navel and late valencia oranges, lemon, tangelo, mandarin, kiwi fruit, grapefruit, avocados and limes, early banana passionfruit, late tamarillos, and early rhubarb.

September

Navel orange, lemon, limes, tangelo, mandarin, avocado, small alpine strawberries (not the large new varieties that fruit later), Cape gooseberries (if they haven't been frosted off, autumn's will mature now), tamarillos (same as for Cape gooseberries), and rhubarb.

October

Loquat, navel orange, lemon, lime, tangelo, mandarin, avocado, early strawberries, very early raspberries (in warm areas), rhubarb, banana passionfruit and tamarillos (ripening from last season).

November

Cherries, early peaches, early nectarines, early apricots, small early plums, Joaneting apples (late November to December), loquat, orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit, strawberries and raspberries.

December

Late cherries, peaches, nectarines, plums, late apricots, early apples like Gravenstein, passionfruit in warmer areas, mulberries, gooseberries, early grapes, early almonds, Cape gooseberry, valencia and blood oranges, a few mandarins, lemons, avocados, babaco, pawpaw or mountain pawpaw in warm areas, strawberries, mid-season raspberries, loganberries, fruit from flowering prunus — good for jam, red, white and black currants, blueberries, banana passionfruit, mangoes in hot areas.

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by Robyn Majkic

Wingham, New South Wales

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Dominic plays Long John Silver with his pet chook.

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Organic labelling needs urgent reform

THE labelling of organic products in Australia is confusing and potentially untruthful. Urgent reform is needed if the genuine organics industry is to maintain the trust of customers, as the news item below demonstrates.

There are eight different organic labelling schemes in Australia, but some well known supermarkets' own-brands of food have no certification names or logos to verify their organic claims.

When contacted, one supermarket chain stated that many of their products come from overseas and are "audited and certified to the Woolworths Quality Assurance Standard".

Considering the supermarkets charge twice the price for organic-labelled food, the very least consumers should be provided with is a way to verify the organic claims. If this isn't provided, people might want to steer clear of such food and only purchase products with a credible certifying logo on the label.

— Jill Redwood

Coming clean on organic logos

Maxine Frith, March 23, 2008, *Sydney Sun Herald*.

Labelling on organic products in Australia is confusing, potentially misleading and urgently needs reform, consumer advocacy group *Choice* says.

It is calling for a single, unified system of certification to replace the current method, whereby several different bodies regulate producers, and some brands make completely unsubstantiated claims to be organic.

Research by *The Sun-Herald* reveals how buying 'organic' can cost customers more than twice as much. The organics industry is one of the fastest growing in the Australian food and grocery sector, increasing by 30 per cent in the past year.

It is now worth about \$400 million a year in the retail sector, the Government's Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation says.

There are eight organic certification bodies, which are overseen by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service.

But some own-brand organic products bought by *The Sun-Herald* in Coles and Woolworths last week had none of the official logos. Woolworths' organic tinned tomatoes had no official certification, and the small print on Coles organic carrots stated "product in conversion to national standard" with no other explanation.

Five different products bought in Coles used five different organic logos.

The Sun-Herald also looked at the cost of organic goods compared with conventional products.

Organic carrots from Coles cost \$3.48 for one kilogram compared with \$1.68 for the conventionally-produced equivalent.

In Woolworths, organic carrots were \$3.98 compared with 94 cents for the mainstream equivalent.

Organic tinned tomatoes in Woolworths cost \$1.15, compared with 58 cents for a 'normal' tin.

And 500 grams of regular minced beef from Coles cost \$5.55 compared with \$7.33 for its organic rival.

Andrew Monk, spokesman for Biological Farmers of Australia, one of the largest official certification bodies, said: "Coles and Woolworths are both working very hard to simplify the system of organic certification. We do have concerns about organic labelling and we have to make sure we are not



just bandying about the word organic willy-nilly."

On the subject of price, Dr Monk said: "Some organic products such as carrots are always going to be a little bit more expensive because they cost more to produce without pesticides and chemicals, but there is no reason why other things should cost more."

Coles and Woolworths did not respond to requests for comment. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission said it might look at the cost of organic brands in its inquiry into the price of groceries.

— mfrith@sunherald.com.au

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Permaculture

in Hindsight



Marauding wood ducks, exploding apple juice bottles. Crikey, there's a lot to keep on top of. The local Farmers' Market is thriving though, Bruce reports.

by Bruce Hedge

Newham, Victoria

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness..."

— Keats, "To Autumn", 1820.

Maybe in Keats' home country, but not here over the past few years! We had a brief burst of 10 mm last night, the first rain for a month, and very welcome it was too, but the dry just goes on and on. This morning we did have some mist, and as I examined the last of my fruiting trees, I wondered how the animals and birds are going to cope with this out-of-control steamroller we're calling Climate Change. Better than humans will, I suspect. Our little place is possibly the best take-away between Melbourne and Bendigo, and we've seen a huge influx of hungry birds this year, but the netted trees have given us more than enough apples and nashis to bottle, juice, freeze and share for the rest of the year.

There is one aspect of permaculture I'm slowly becoming aware of after thirty years: systems are vital. Systems to store produce. Systems for water distribution. Systems for using wwoofers (Willing Workers On Organic Farms) effectively. Systems to keep machinery maintained and available when it's needed. Systems to protect produce from predators. Systems for gathering firewood. And many others no doubt. I find talking to people about how they do their thing is usually enlightening. Of course reading *Earth Garden* and the *Earth Garden Path* on-line helps hugely, too. I see there are over 1200 members now! Check it out!

Following on from last issue's story about the tomatoes-in-tyres trick, I have to report that there seemed to be no detectable difference between yields in the plants I left the tyres on, and the ones I removed the tyres from. The crop was rather good, around 125 kg from 45 plants in an area about six metres by four metres, so I'll be using the same technique next year in a different area to give the plants an

early boost. Next year we'll also remember to plant a few seedlings in December to crop and ripen later. Last year the plants were pulled up in late April, and many of the green fruit continued ripening inside giving us fresh tomatoes until late June. This year, "Mighty Red" was the biggest yielder for the main crop outside, but it grows into quite a tree and needs very strong stakes. It's also a hybrid, so seeds don't come true, but it would be an excellent variety for small gardens. From a permacultural perspective, one tomato plant which sprang forth from the compost in a pumpkin bed was a big cropper and absolutely delicious, sprawling all over the place amongst the pumpkins, and showing the benefit of letting plants self seed and doing their own thing. The family consensus was that this wild tomato tasted better than the

few we got from the Digger's Seed Club taste test winner, the wonderfully named 'Wapsipinicon Peach' which I grew for the first time this year. Sure, it tasted good, but the yield on my bush was not huge.

I had an interesting puzzle with my cabbages this year. I planted thirty or so in January, and looked after them as they grew strongly through the hot spells we had. One well-timed burst of 'Dipel' (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) was enough to knock out the white cabbage butterfly's small caterpillars so they didn't do too much damage before the seedlings were big enough to look after themselves. One morning, after a couple of days away,

I went out to find the whole crop skeletonised and looking not very happy at all! I searched in vain for those pesky little caterpillars, but could find none. A crop of cauliflower nearby had not been similarly devastated, so I was quite perplexed. The culprits turned out to be a flock of twenty or so wood ducks, which had made our dam their home for the previous month or so. They were very good at cleaning up the windfall apples out in the zone three orchard starting in mid-January, but had soon discovered that Bruce's cabbages made a fine entrée before the main course. Ah, well, they are giving it back to me in duck poo, and now a net covers the cabbage patch. The plants are recovering well, and will



Pressing apples for juice. Don't forget to sterilise it if you want it to keep over winter.



Cabbages skeletonised by wood ducks.

be OK. I wonder what apple-and-cabbage flavoured wood duck tastes like? Joking!

The Farmers' Market at Lancefield, central Victoria, in March was sensational! There were a large number of producers showing off their main harvest, and many customers took advantage of their products. What a great development Farmers' Markets have become. It's great to be able to talk directly to the producers, and to admire the ability of these wonderful people to grow food that has not travelled hundreds of kilometres. Hand-made chocolate is possibly an exception!

A friend growing grapes reports that his fruit has ripened much earlier this year, and I've found the same with my apples. We pressed thirty litres of juice in mid-March, pasteurising and bottling for later use. This process involves heating to 70 degrees Celsius and holding it there for three minutes. My home brew beer bottles were commandeered and crown sealing should keep the juice without refrigeration over the winter. An initial taste test revealed little difference between fresh and bottled juice. Perhaps not as much vitamin C, but better than store-bought! Some of the Fuji juice has been evaporated down to a quarter of its original volume producing a wonderful sweet fruit-based syrup that keeps very well and is thick enough to use like an apple jam on sandwiches.

With Adelaide experiencing fifteen consecutive days over 35 degrees in March, China having had one of its worst winters ever, and parts of Wisconsin getting 40 cm of snow in mid-March, I wonder what Mother Nature has in store for us this winter? The only thing absolutely certain about climate change is total uncertainty. I'm off to rake up some leaves.

PS: I've just had a couple of my apple juice bottles explode, and have now realised I've made a significant error in the article above. Pasteurising the juice does NOT kill all the fermenting organisms — it just kills the bacteria from bird poo and other nasties. The bottles still need refrigeration like pasteurised milk. They WON'T keep over winter. To STERILISE the juice it must be boiled and kept at a simmer for three minutes, then placed in sterilised bottles and sealed. THEN it'll keep. I should have asked my long-deceased Grandma — she'd have known!

Information Desk at Farmers' Market at Lancefield



Information Desk at a typical supermarket



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NEED A TREECHANGE?

Moving to a new area for new lifestyle is hard enough without having to look for a new job. I know, I did it. I started this business ten years ago and now, for reasons that you may or may not discover, I'm moving on (in my head, anyway). Time for a change!

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From Spade To Blade

Garden Recipes by Gary Thomas

Let the gardening chef take you through his tasty ways, from the humble spud to an exotic northern Italian confection that will be a hit at any dinner party.



What Has Eyes, is Round, is White and Found?

It's International Year of the Potato and around my way this means a year-long round of activities celebrating the humble spud or, as our United Nations calls them, our 'Hidden Treasure'. In a future edition of *Earth Garden* you'll see a report on the spudhunters' children's food activity touring the regions. Feel free to use the concept for yourself in your own community.

For me, well, I feel humble in front of the spud. The more I learn, the less I know. The more varieties I try to keep up with, the more arrive to be tested all over again. Forget the monocultural push of the giant russet in order to feed the deep-fry vats of the industrial world — potato biodiversity is alive and growing.

I only peel potatoes if they are soft and the skin is really old and dirty. I keep a variety of scrubbing brushes and cloths to hand and have a special sink with a foot-operated tap so I can release just enough water to keep the cleaning moving forward. The younger the spud, the easier cleaning becomes. Just because a potato plant is still going, doesn't mean you can't 'bandicoot' what you need. A soft skin that scrubs off is no impediment to a good meal.

Oh, and the giant russet is a fine spud for its purpose, by the way.

Potato Pie

1kg potatoes — use Pontiac, Valour, Dutch Cream, King Edward, Sebago, Winlock or one of the 20 other potatoes grown commercially in Australia that are good for mashing.

3 good-sized onions

A splash of olive oil

A cup of tomato purée

A handful of finely chopped carrot and celery

A cup and a half of French 'puy' lentils

Salt, pepper and parsley to season

Some milk and/or cheese for the mash, if you desire.

1 cup breadcrumbs

I THOUGHT WE'D START WITH LEEK AND POTATO SOUP, THEN POTATO GNOCCHI FOLLOWED BY POTATO STEW, THEN POTATO ALMOND TART!

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BANGERS AND MASH??



Clean or remove any dirty layers from the onion shell then roast whole in a moderate oven until they feel soft and mushy. When cool enough to handle, peel off the burnt outer layer and chop finely.

Heat the olive oil in a deep, heavy frypan. Gently sauté the carrot and celery until soft, a few minutes. Add the tomato purée and onions and fry in the oil also for a minute or two.

Rinse the lentils briefly in cold water and add to the pot. These lentils are particularly good for this dish as they hold their shape over a long cooking time, rather than breaking down into a slurry as many others do.

Simmer the pot gently for about one hour or until soft, adding some extra water, salt and pepper as needed to keep the dish wet and juicy. Some other veg can be added during the hour — cabbage, maybe kale, swede or cauliflower.

During this time, boil the potatoes until tender. Drain, season and enrich with the milk and cheese if using.

Oil a casserole dish and lay half the breadcrumbs on the bottom. Top with a layer of potato then a layer of lentils. Repeat and finish with a third spread of spuds. Sprinkle with the remaining breadcrumbs, another drizzle of oil over the top and bake until toasty.

Ticinese Tumble

Nicola or Kipfler potatoes are great to toss and roast in this southern Swiss-style potato dish. Kennebecs, Desirée and Tasmanian Pinkeye are also great. When I have them, I do the whole range in the one roasting pan, skins on, of course. Beautiful and delicious.

First, blend the sauce. A handful of dry bay leaves, half as much sage, a few cloves of garlic and a tender piece of rosemary. Purée all finely with a half cup of olive oil, a quarter cup of butter, some salt and some parsley. Squeeze the juice from half a lemon.

Allow about 400 grams per person. Cut a kilo or two of potatoes up into quite small pieces, say, no bigger than the first knuckle on your thumb and coat thoroughly with

the sauce. Place in a hot oven for 15 minutes, then toss and turn the wedges and cook for 15 minutes more. Eat as is or with a leafy green salad. Extra salt is optional.

Now, a little word about recipes.

I sometimes wonder if anyone ever reads this little column, living as I do in my little ivory vacuum. And I often find that one only tends to get some feedback when things go wrong. So I know now that people do read these recipes because I made a mistake in the last issue. The pictorial recipe for the upside-down caramel cake goes into a 26 cm spring form pan (as pictured), not the 24 cm spring form pan (as written).

I'd like to thank the people who took the time to write and point out that error and to remind everybody that if it looks like a fish and smells like a fish then it probably is a fish.

Meaning, if you want to feed ten and the amounts don't seem enough, then double them. If your casserole dish is small, or your oven cooks low, adjust your method.

I have reviewed many thousands of recipes by many great cooks and it is a rare handful that stand true by themselves. Cooking is about engagement, passion and intuition.

Believe in yourself.

Montebianco

Montebianco, for those who don't know, means 'white mountain'. It is a quite amazing dessert. It takes a little effort to make but the results are spectacular and it is an absolute dinner party crowd pleaser.

There are many variations on this northern Italian classic. The basis of this version comes from Barbara Bertuzzi's lovely and authentic *Bolognese Cooking Heritage*.

- 600 g peeled chestnuts
- 300 ml cream
- 100 g mascarpone or cream cheese
- 100 g icing sugar
- 1 tbsp icing sugar in the cream
- A few drops of vanilla
- 1 tbsp amaretto (an almond-flavoured liqueur, substitute at will)
- 1 tbsp brandy
- A dash of salt and some lemon peel
- Pieces of thin sponge cake — 1 per person.

Boil the peeled chestnuts in a little water with the lemon peel and a dash of salt and sugar until just tender. Process them through a medium vegetable grater.

Add the mascarpone, icing sugar, vanilla, amaretto and brandy, mixing and pressing all the ingredients together.

If making individual desserts, place a piece of sponge on the plate, spooning and shaping the chestnut mix to look like those mountains you see at the end of *The Sound of Music*. If making one for the whole table, layer the sponge pieces around the bottom and pile the Matterhorn up as high as you dare.

Whip the cream and sugar then spread it over the whole mountain to make it white. You can do this with the back of a spoon or with a cream piping bag. I have, at times, substituted a cooked apple purée for the cream



Boil the peeled chestnuts before grating for Montebianco.

coating. Some lemon juice and sugar with the apple tends to have a bleaching effect which whitens it for spreading.

Before serving, dust lightly with bitter cocoa.

Cheers, Gary Thomas.

Desperate Mum Finds The Solution To Washing Without Nasty Chemicals – Aids Breast Cancer Research Too!

DARKAN WA - If you are concerned about the environment, if you're worried about the chemicals around your house... but you still expect to have a clean, and fresher smelling wash, then **Miracle Wash Laundry Balls** are your answer. Please let me explain.

My name's Dana Steddy, CEO and Founder of **EnviroCare Holdings**. But before that I was simply known as Mum to my 4 young children. Trouble was, 3 of them suffered horribly from eczema. Little did I know it was the toxic residue from my laundry detergent that was partly causing these flare-ups. I soon wised up, took control of the situation, and found a safer non-toxic alternative. And then I started my business so every one could benefit from my findings. Here's how... They are called **Miracle Wash Laundry Balls**. A safe, non-toxic way to wash your clothes that leaves your laundry smelling fresh, clean and naturally soft.

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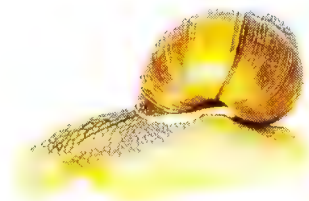
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Volume three of *Back Yard Farmer* will be available in newsagents, bookshops and from the Good Life Book Club for \$19.95 from the end of June. This is volume three of the Book Formerly Known As *Home Farmer*. Many readers have been asking for volume three and the following extract from Wendy on natural snail control gives you a taste of what to expect. The book contains loads of information on: chooks, peaches, no-dig, grow your own coffee, basil, low cost vegie gardening, home cheese making, bush blocks, urban gardens and much more. It's a colour-filled, Earth Gardener's delight.



Snail Bait: Some Organic Options



Garden snails:
vegie seedling
connoisseurs.

If you have a snail problem in the vegie garden, but don't want to use a commercial snail bait, don't despair. Wendy has come up with some eco-friendly options that should solve your problem.

by Wendy Bartlett

Nairne, South Australia

DON'T you hate it when you go out to your garden to check how your new vegie seedlings are going, only to find the resident snails and slugs have had a food and wine festival using your plants as the main attraction? After muttering some choice words you'll want to give them a taste of their own medicine, but as an earth lover you'll want to know how to do it without using baits containing harmful chemicals.

Commercial snail baits

Most snail baits contain Metaldehyde, which is absorbed through the skin or ingested while an animal is feeding. The chemical depresses or excites the central nervous system, causing the body to produce an excess of mucous, leading to dehydration, an inability to move and eventual death. It breaks down to acetaldehyde by bacteria, which breaks down further to acetic acid (vinegar) which decomposes to carbon dioxide and water.

The problem with this chemical is it can kill native fauna, household pets and more importantly, can be dangerous if ingested by small children. Finding chemical-free

solutions is a safer option.

Iron phosphate, a compound occurring naturally in the soil, has been used since the 1930s as an effective snail killer. Products available contain a blend of iron phosphate with an attractant (bait) added. They work by dehydrating victims, which lose their appetite and crawl off under a plant to die.

Biological control

Hand picking snails is one way to reduce populations, but can be time consuming as it needs to be carried out early in the morning or in the evening. I creep around outside at about nine o'clock at night (seems to be the time when snails are on the move) with a bucket, a torch and a pair of gloves and am always amazed to fill the bucket in less than fifteen minutes, although I'm not sure what my neighbours think of my night time activities!

A few nights of this madness and you'll have the population under control, but you'll need to repeat the process every few weeks to capture young snails that have hatched from eggs since your last late night expedition.

As temperatures drop in autumn and rain starts to fall slugs and snails will be ready to lay their eggs. Hand collecting as many as you can in late summer before they



Wendy captures another little critter.

Beer and 'tomato sauce' is irresistible to the snail.

begin breeding will save your plants and your time later in the season. Alternatively, spray clumps of them at dusk in summer to trick them into thinking it's autumn and when they start moving about, you'll be able to capture them. Once collected, I drown them in water and then place them into my covered compost bin where they decompose.

Natural predators include rats, blackbirds, starlings, magpies, mudlarks, ibis, various species of lizard, Khaki Campbell or Indian Runner ducks and the pale yellow slug, the pestacella. Encouraging these creatures into the garden

will keep your input to a minimum. Provide hollow logs for lizards to live in and plant plenty of native shrubs to entice birds into your garden.

Beer baits are a great way of enticing the slippery suckers into your homemade brewery, that's if you don't mind parting with the amber liquid! I make my own brewery, recycling a disused red two-litre sauce bottle with the end cut off. The dark interior of the container makes it more enticing to the snail. Mix some flat beer with water and add two tablespoons of sugar

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Wood ash as a snail deterrent around a young broccoli seedling.

per litre of beer.

You can buy commercial snail traps for this purpose but making your own is a great way to reuse materials or keep the kids amused one sunny afternoon.

Ways to deter snails and slugs

A sprinkling of wood ash around young vegie seedlings will help to deter snails because the ash irritates their skin, but you'll need to reapply after rain, which can be time consuming if you have loads of young seedlings to protect.

Coffee is another useful deterrent as it is a natural pesticide, working by paralysing and killing some insects that feed on plants. Snails don't like the irritation to their skin and will turn away once they come in contact with it. I often use well-decomposed stable manure, which seems to have some effect, although it's not foolproof. Avoid using salt as this can affect soil pH.

However, you can make a moat around a garden bed or around a small orchard using copper sulphate, or you can use tyres, coated inside with copper sulphate, around individual plants. A solution of copper sulphate can be placed

in the bottom rim of the tyre, which makes it undesirable for snails to enter.

This is useful for people trying to grow plants in country areas where tiny white native snails are a huge problem. To make a moat, use half pipes of earthenware or lengths of poly pipe cut in half, blocked with rubber, stuck with waterproof glue. Fill with a solution of copper sulphate and check regularly to make sure it's free of leaves or debris that could make it easy for snails to travel across.

Other deterrents include eggshells, raw sheep wool, gravel, sand and sawdust. I use soft drink bottles cut in half, but they have to be removed on hot days or the seedling will cook and die. I have experimented by placing dead snails around seedlings and it seems to be a deterrent. Maybe snails don't like entering a graveyard of their own kind — I guess we wouldn't like it either! It could be the smell too because after a few days the dead snails begin to smell, especially in hot weather.

You'll need to replace them every few days in summer or you might be attracting other unwanted pests into the garden, which may cause damage to your plants.

Companion planting

There are several plants that seem to deter snails and they include sage, rosemary, thyme, hyssop and lavender. Place oak leaves or bark mulches around vulnerable plants. They are bitter and the slugs and snails don't like the harsh material on their soft bodies. Pyrethrum, garlic, onion, wormwood and quassia sprays have been known to repel slugs and snails due to their bitter taste.

Self-sown plants seem to be almost immune to attack, probably because they are strong and healthy and aren't as attractive to pests, so if possible, leave them where they germinate. Unfortunately, most of us have to put some planning into our vegie gardens and the snails can smell a weak or diseased plant a mile away and attack in a frenzy. We shouldn't complain though, because it's nature's way of making sure the strongest plants survive.

So what are you waiting for? Grab your bucket, don a pair of gloves, your boots and start the snail and slug search — your plants will love you for it.

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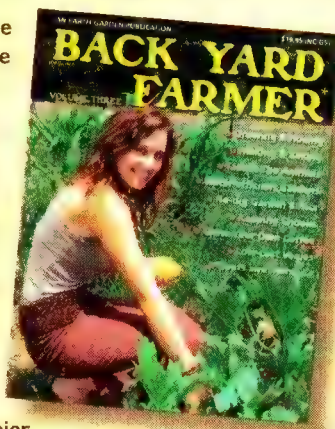


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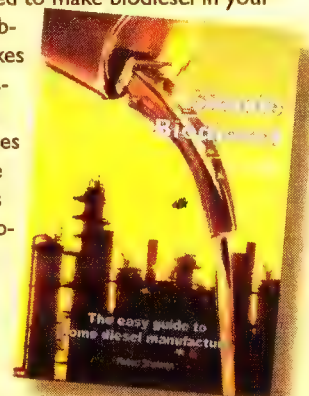
You don't need 20 acres and a bulldozer to live The Good Life: *Back Yard Farmer* is chockful of ideas, advice and inspiration from real people living happy, sustainable lifestyles. In vivid, colourful detail, learn how to make your lifestyle greener, happier and more fulfilling. All from the comfort of your own back yard. 80 pages full colour.



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No Static For Electric Dream

by Alan Gray
Trentham, Victoria

EARTH Garden's electric car has been a social butterfly since it made its debut in mid-February as a star exhibit at the Sustainable Living Festival in Melbourne's Federation Square. From 16 to 19 February, tens of thousands of people peered under the bonnet, examined the boot and marvelled at the little car as it sat in the shadow of Finders Street Station at one of Australia's busiest intersections. The irony of three days of intensive car fumes pouring over us, as we talked about the emission-free car seemed lost on many people, but it was encouraging to see how many were genuinely excited about the Blade Runner.

Since that weekend, the car has also been featured on Channel Seven's 'Today Tonight' program, with Blade Electric Vehicles owner, Ross Blade, taking the car for a spin on camera and explaining its benefits.

I did a radio interview with Michael MacKenzie from Radio National's 'Bush Telegraph' that turned out to be great fun. Michael waited for me outside the ABC Southbank

studio and as I drove up he began recording an interview onto his portable tape recorder. All was going well as we inspected the motor, hopped in the car and then prepared to take off for a drive around Melbourne's Botanic Gardens. But then — disaster — I couldn't start the car! I nervously fumbled with switches, dials, and knobs as Michael and I chatted away, recording the whole episode. Heavy breathing, a dry mouth, and finally the penny dropped: I'd accidentally knocked the 'Emergency cut-off switch' and hadn't pushed it back in all the way. Can you imagine a worse advertisement for an electric car? Luckily, all went well after that and the interview was good fun.

Next, the Blade Runner was on display for three days at the HIA Home Ideas Show in Melbourne. Thousands more people inspected every part of the car, and Ross Blade then delivered the car back to Trentham for our Office Manager, Karen Sandow, to spend a few weeks driving the car to and from the office (around 50 km per day). Karen was surprised how "zippy" the car was. "It drives like a normal car and I'm surprised how powerful it is."

In early May the car was again on display for three days as the central exhibit on the Australian Technology Show Case stand at the Enviro 08 Exhibition.

The car is also on display at the Going Green Expo (see the back cover) at Jeff's Shed (The Melbourne Exhibition Centre at Docklands) from 5 to 8 June, next to the *Earth Garden* stall. Drop in if you get a chance!

The car has now done more than 2000 km without a hitch, and it's a total delight.

Car Name

Gee — our flippant little request for name suggestions for the new *Earth Garden* electric company car has really struck a chord with readers. We've been flooded with entries, and we've loved reading through all the comments,

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Ross Blade inspects the Earth Garden Blade Runner recently at the EG office.

and having a chuckle at some of the ideas. Karen, our hard-working Office Manager nicknamed the car BEVerley: it was built by BEV in Castlemaine.

Read through some of the submissions below, and see if you agree with my choice at the end . . .

'Sunshine Express' was suggested by Ian Valentine of Bundaberg. 'Sunshine' or 'Marigold', by Bob and Lorraine Salthouse of Qld. 'Sunshine'" again, by Jenny

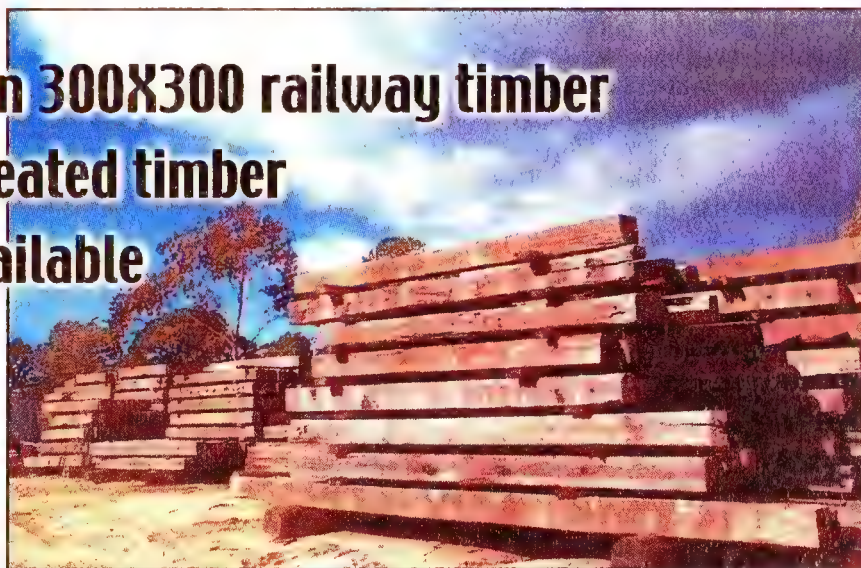
Chapman. 'Eggbert' (a clever acronym) by Kirrie and Jamie. 'Little Miss Sunshine' by Michael Cleary of Seaford Vic. 'GetzSmart' by Steve Stahl of Bellbrae, Victoria. 'EcoEgg', or 'EggNog', by Mel's daughter. 'The Bumblebee' by Kylie Willingham of Torquay, Vic. 'Sola-Yella', by Chris Hunt and tribe of Quorrobolong, NSW. 'Earth Spirit' by Bob and Margaret Causton. 'Sunflower Power', 'Solar EGG', and 'Solarbarrow' by Lindi Bowen of Bald Hills, QLD.

And the winner is . . .

I've decided I like 'Little Miss Sunshine' best. And 'Sunny' for short. Congratulations to Michael Cleary of Seaford in Victoria. Michael has won a copy of *Solar That Really Works!* the fabulous guide to DIY solar by Collyn Rivers, and a copy of *The Good Life Bread Book*, Earth Garden's superb new full-colour bread-and-living book.

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* ETHICAL ENTERPRISE *

From Silk Weaving Waste Into Beautiful String

Earth Garden begins a new semi-regular series looking at small businesses and community enterprises that have decided to do more than just make money — they've decided to help poor communities become more economically self-sufficient through direct assistance. Marion explains how her Melbourne business, **Beautiful Silks**, is working to help Indian women make a living from waste textiles.

by Marion Hera-Gorr

Fitzroy, Victoria

YEARS ago, travelling in Switzerland, I got onto the wrong train. I was furious at the time, but found out the next day that the train I should have caught had been on fire, with 50 people badly burnt.

One day recently when friend, Anne Young, and I got on the wrong (slow) train in India — the Mysore train stopping all stations, instead of the Chaumundi express, we were quite happy. Walking through the train looking for a nice clear window to enjoy our three hour journey, we sat down next to a gentleman who chatted to us. This was our first meeting with Maheshchandraguru, secretary of the Vikasana Institute of Rural Development.

How can I convey to you in my few words, our subsequent wonderful visit to Mandya village in Karnataka State in the south of India, home of the Vikasana Institute?

I'll start with rural women's development. These words are on the lips of many people from bankers to scientists, from social workers to sweepers. I first heard those words, in a bar in Mysore where two scientists shared a drink with Anne and I, and talked passionately about their

commitment to women and how silk culture can raise their standard of living. These men are from the Sericulture Institute, Mysore. In India, skilled hand workers cannot find enough work, facilities, training, time or space to feed themselves or their dependents. They need investment.

String makers in Mandya are on the lower paid rung of Vikasana rural women's workers. The string makers gather their resources from banana trees; the fibre is free and they sit down and make string by hand from this resource. Their hand skills are fantastic. Anne and I bought some of this string and have been selling it to raise funds for the villagers, at \$10 per one hour of women's work. The 'Stitching & Beyond' group in Tasmania deserve a big thank you for their very generous donation of \$200 toward this initial fund raiser. This money (with other collected from clients in total now \$570) has been sent back to Mandya and some progress has been made with building a women's shelter on their land. For up-to-date progress reports go to www.beautifulsilks.com/mandyawhere.html.

2008 workshop in India

We then invited India Flint, Nalda Searles and Susan Holmes to come to India and work alongside these women. A generous response came back from these artists (see below). So we are off in 2008, to work in the village with women from rural India turning one person's rubbish — silk weaving waste — into another's treasure!

In my business, a handmade silk yarn would be appreciated by our clients who do textile weaving and make wonderful items. So Beautiful Silks has arranged for silk weaving waste from our dupioni silk supplier to be delivered to the Vikasana string makers, to be made into silk string.

Selling banana string, while great for Vikasana now, is not going to sustain these women and complete the building. So my very creative, business-minded husband, known as Elephant, came up with a new product for them to make: silk string carry-bags, similar to New-Guinea bilums.

Plastic bag impact

Nothing arouses fury like the disposable plastic supermarket bag. British figures show that ten billion bags are



Local trainees from the village of Mandya at a Vikasana Institute mushroom workshop.



Author, Marion Hera-Gorr, with the Director of the Vikasana Institute, P K Kesavan.

used each year (up from eight billion four years ago), and that each citizen uses, each year, an average of 300 plastic bags. Most end up in landfill after a single use. Each bag lasts up to 400 years, spending the vast majority of that time in a landfill site or strewn across the countryside. As plastic bags degrade in landfill the bags can emit toxins to the soil.

In Ireland, a tax of 15 euro-cents (AUD 0.25) per bag resulted in a 90 per cent drop in plastic bag usage, and raised 3.5 million Euros which was spent on environmental projects. Bangladesh imposed a ban after it was revealed that the bags were a major contributor to the 1988 and 1998 floods which submerged two-thirds of the country. Taiwan



Women at the Vikasana Institute with Maheshchandraguru, the Institute Secretary, at far left.

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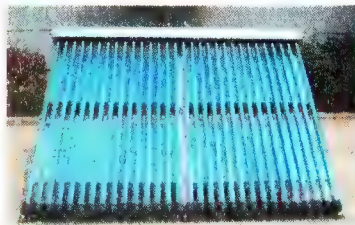
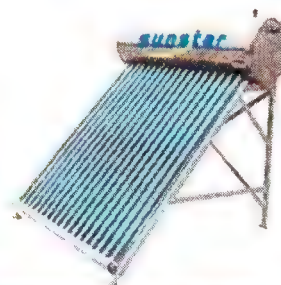
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(which used 20 billion bags a year) eventually banned the bag in 2003, in an effort to reduce plastic waste by 30 per cent, as the island's landfills neared capacity.

Tesco, a leading UK supermarket, hopes to reduce the number of bags used by one billion. Tesco's management say that this should save approximately 200,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. On the Tesco figures, each 5,000 plastic bags therefore produce one tonne of Greenhouse gas. Our hand-made string bag needs only be used 11 times to have a lower environmental impact than using 11 disposable plastic bags (this covers the carbon load of transport from India and a proportion of our carbon load in retailing to you).

Should last 20 years

Similar string bags we and our friends use have lasted us for 20 or more years: on the UK figures outlasting, therefore, 6,000 plastic bags. We've added silk for strength and to make the bags easier on your hands. They're easier to carry, take up less space in your backpack or rucksack, and they hold more than plastic bags. They are natural products and will compost easily, without emitting toxins. Silk is the strongest natural fibre in the world, with a breaking strain so good that its major military use is for the making of parachutes. These co-operatively made silk-mix bilums are a project of Beautiful Silks and Trade Carbon Direct. No one else on the planet has them.

To support their artisans in their work, Vikasana has designed a superannuation-based loan scheme, and

Vikasana is asking for 35 Australians to invest \$2000 each in this fund, for ten years, to get this building completed as soon as possible. Funds can be rolled over into your own do-it-yourself superannuation fund from existing super funds. Each investor will receive a beaded super fund certificate made by the higher skilled beaders in Mandya. We expect that when the loan is due to be repaid, these items will be surrendered to the fund so you can redeem your investment ... but you may choose to keep the certificate and auction it yourself. There will be only 35 of these individualized, hand-crafted, bearer bonds on the entire planet.

As our contribution to the Vikasana scheme, we will donate a do-it-yourself super fund set-up kit (usual value \$400) to be sent to you free if you agree to invest \$10,000 in this fund; the certificates bear 7% interest per annum compounded so you get \$4000 back for each \$2000 investment.

With these wonderful skills abounding in Mandya, supported by the basis of Mahatma Gandhi's design for rural development, which sees Vikasana as an established organisation now over 40 years old, some real progress can be made harnessing the positive forces of globalisation.

Join the project

You can join our artists and the Indian artisans in making string bags, in chemical-free dyeing, or just in yoga and living in a rural Indian village. We plan to travel with interested people to India (some spaces are still available, contact Beautiful Silks in Melbourne Ph: (03) 9419 7745) and workshop for three days in Mandya, alongside string makers, beaders and weavers, and see what interesting sustainable products we can make from silk weaving by products.

India Flint (dedicated textile artist, author of the fabulous new book, *Eco Colour* — see Judith Gray's review on page 68 *Earth Garden* 143) will be guiding the environmentally sustainable dye practice. Alongside her, Nalda Searles and Susan Holmes (both wonderful creative people with magic hands) will guide all participants, local and Australian side by side, to bring these silk waste products into a life of their own, weaving, crocheting, beading, and making. Then we'll rest and look, and discuss.

Our goal is to leave Mandya with some items that are suitable for sale to you — clean and handmade, with good money being paid hourly to the workers responsible for producing these items. One item we are definitely going to produce is the crocheted silk string shopping bag mentioned above.

This is the plan, to leave the women in Mandya with a building, a product to make and a way to use a local waste product. Pre purchases of these products will be available from June 2008, see our website under 'news'. Contact us also for details on the Vikasana superannuation investment program. Spaces on our Mandya textile development workshops are limited but we are taking bookings on a first come, first served basis.

• You can get more details of the 2008 trip to India from the Beautiful Silks website at: www.beautifulsilks.com/news, or phone (03) 9419 7745. Beautiful Silks is at 101 Victoria St (NOT Victoria Parade), Fitzroy.

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WILDLIFE In My Life

The Dinosaur in the Tomato Patch

by Jackie French

Braidwood, New South Wales

THE first goanna I met looked like a dinosaur: two metres long, wider than I am, and with the rolling gait of a cartoon brontosaurus. She was marching through my tomato patch towards the chook house ...

That was about 35 years ago. Since then I've watched a goanna dig up a paddock of just planted potatoes — she hoped they were eggs; have had a baby goanna race for the top of my head (it thought I was a tree) and watched a female laying her eggs in a termite mound. (Saves baby-, sorry, egg-sitting. The heat hatches the eggs). I have also seen the magic of a dozen tiny goannas — each like a miniature dragon — digging out of a termite mound and racing down to the camouflage of the rocks in the creek. I've held a hibernating young goanna, too. It lay motionless on my hand till suddenly the warmth woke it up. It ended up in my hair, as well ...

Lacy — the goanna in the photo — shares our garden. For a while she shared the eggs too, till Bryan worked out that chooks can fly, and goannas can't. He cut a window in the chook house, with a perch either side, so the chooks could fly in and out but Lacy was foiled. She spent the next three



Not cute: a stropky larrikin with bad breath. Lacy in Jackie's garden.

months lying on the chook house roof, hissing furiously at chooks, us, and life in general.

Goannas here mostly eat carrion — dead stuff. They're also fond of the occasional peach, especially fermented wind-falls. A drunk metre-long goanna on the doorstep is ... interesting. A goanna with a hangover is even worse.

Goannas aren't cute, shy or fluffy, or any of the Disney-type clichés about wildlife. They're stropky larrikins with bad breath. But who wants to live in a world that's cute and fluffy?



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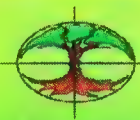
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Bitter-Sweet Progress For Rooftop Solar

The long-awaited South Australian feed-in tariff for grid-connected solar power has finally been announced, following the parliamentary negotiations mentioned in the March 'Green Power News'. Thanks to excellent negotiating efforts by South Australian Upper House Greens MLC, Mark Parnell, South Australia's feed-in tariff has been extended from its initial proposed term of five years, to 20 years. The tariff will be based on paying grid-connect customers 44 cents/kwh for power fed back into the grid, and compares favourably with the average cost of 17 cents/kwh most South Australian currently pay for mains power.

Unfortunately, the system is based on 'net metering', not a gross tariff based on the total amount of solar power generated. The challenge for environmentalists remains to change the SA government's mind about net metering, to bring in a 44 cents/kwh tariff for every kwh of desperately-needed solar power.

Most of the 40 countries worldwide that have feed in tariffs for solar power pay a premium rate for all energy generated, whether it is used at home or fed into the grid.

Meanwhile, Queensland Premier, Anna Bligh, has followed South Australia and is bringing in a feed-in tariff at the same rate — 44 cents/kwh — from 1 July. This is a bitter-sweet victory, because existing grid-connected customers in Queensland will actually be worse off.

In Queensland, grid-connect solar power systems are connected directly to the electricity grid and customers are credited for every kwh of solar power they produce. Under the new scheme, which mirrors the South Australian

system, all grid-connect power systems will only receive the 44cent/kwh for excess power fed back to the grid — not for the entire amount of solar power produced. The Queensland Department of Mines and Energy backtracked, announcing that customers will only receive the new 44 cent feed-in payment for any surplus power they generate.

Toby Hutcheon, Director of the Queensland Conservation Council, while "delighted that from 1 July the Bligh Government has set a fair price for domestically generated solar power," told *Earth Garden* that the QCC and other Queensland organisations such as the Consumers' Association, are lobbying to have the net metering decision reversed in favour of a gross tariff. "This about-face by the government completely undermines the intent of a feed-in tariff," said Hutcheon.

"Very few — if any — of the 5000 people who have registered to buy a 1 kW solar PV system through the State Government's bulk buying strategy will ever get any of the tariff," he continued. "We urge Minister Wilson and Premier Bligh to commit to clean, green electricity — pay the 44 cent tariff and retain the current metering arrangements," said Hutcheon.

"We are actively campaigning to restore a gross tariff. The rationale is strange and it reduces the incentive for consumers," he told *Earth Garden*. The QCC also published data showing that the average all-electric household in south east Queensland uses an average of a whopping 32 kwh of electricity per day. Queensland is clearly in need of all the solar power it can generate.

Meanwhile the ACT Legislative Assembly is considering a bill that would pay households four times the domestic price of electricity for any solar power they put back into the

grid — based on gross tariff not net metering. If legislated, it will be the most generous scheme in the country. Government backbencher, Mick Gentleman, says the proposed legislation is similar to its original form but includes a 20 year cap on payments.

Feed-in tariffs have been credited with making Germany the world's leading user and installer of solar power. Feed-in tariffs mean that a householder can install a 1 kw solar power system that should generate around 1500 kwh of electricity per year (25 to 33 per cent of the 'average' household's electricity needs). The cost is around \$14,000 fully installed, less an \$8000 federal government rebate, and less about another \$500 in Renewable Energy Credits.

The \$5500 net cost means householders who use little power during the day, can feed power back to the grid and reduce their power bills by 44 cents/kwh for this solar power, compared to the average 17 cents/kwh cost of mains power they consume at night, on cloudy days, or when they're using more power than they produce.

On 5 May Victoria followed the lead of South Australia and Queensland and announced a feed in tariff that will apply from 2009. Unfortunately, the Victorian feed in tariff — 60 cents per kwh — is also based on net metering. It was quickly denounced by Victorian environment campaigners as being well below global standards.

"They've clearly designed a scheme that they know does not lead to a rapid uptake of solar power," said Mark Wakeham, Environment Victoria Campaigns Director.

ATA campaigner, Brad Shone, said that the government's claim that households would be able to pay off panels in less than ten years was "far from the truth".

Hot Rock Power Is Here

Generating emission-free electricity from hot-rocks deep underground is still to be proved commercially, but a global breakthrough has been made. In France, the Soultz project in the north-west of the country, became the first hot rock power plant to produce power, with a 2 megawatt plant commissioned in May.

In Australia, Geodynamics, the most advanced of ten local hot-rock companies, has reported its own milestone. In late April the company reported that surface flow tests at its Cooper Basin tenement were strong (and hot) enough to justify a 1 MW trial plant. After numerous technical hitches, Geodynamics has proved that the theory — forcing water down one drill hole and then up another in superheated form — works.

In reaching 'proof of concept' stage, Geodynamics has done enough to justify the trial 1 MW generator. This will produce enough electricity for Geodynamics' own needs and the

nearby small village of Innamincka. The company envisages a 50 MW commercial plant by mid-2011, enough to power 50,000 households, moving to a 500 MW plant by 2015. It expects the temperature of the granites — an average 270 degrees and up to 300 degrees — to erode by only 40 degrees over the first 50 years of operation. Origin Energy has committed \$150 million to project costs. Geodynamics enjoys the advantage of naturally occurring underground water, access to a specialist drilling rig and a two-year lead over its rivals. Its challenge, however, is that its site is 500 km from the nearest transmission grid.

At the small end, KUTH Energy said recently that surface heat-flow tests from its northern Tasmanian tenement ranked among the top 17 per cent of flow values recorded in Australia. The results from KUTH's first four holes suggest the heat and strength of the flows are similar to those recorded in the Cooper Basin, the world's hottest hot-rock province. KUTH's next step

is to go deeper and work out how hot the granite 'basement' is, as well as the quality of the insulating blanket of rock above it.

QCC Plans Offshore Wind Farm To Power Desal Plant

The Queensland Conservation (QCC) in March sought funding from the Queensland Government to construct an offshore wind farm for the Tugun Desalination plant on the Gold Coast. "The Tugun plant will emit over 200,000 tonnes of Greenhouse gas each year, due to its high energy use," said Toby Hutcheon, Coordinator of QCC. "With the recent government announcement that the Tugun plant will be carbon neutral, the obvious strategy now is to invest in renewable energy to directly power the facility. QCC wants to make this happen. All we need is State Government support," said Hutcheon. QCC has sought \$4 million from the Queensland Renewable Energy Fund for a feasibility study — the first stage of a construction program.

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Earth People Write continued from page 7

Best bread ever

Dear EG friends,

Just back from weeks on the road during which time I read many mags including yours. Congratulations on the cover and the you-beaut solar-powered car ... if only all this were available to us all. But we remain hopeful ... for those of us who really want to change to a totally green lifestyle but can't afford to ... take heart. Maybe present govt will put a scheme into operation that we can all afford.

We mostly toured Victoria ... what a lovely state it is! Can I say that the bread we bought from the Red Beard Bakery in Trentham is honestly the best we have ever tasted ... just wish I could buy from them all the time! It's better than even the bread I bake regularly and I thought mine was OK! All the best

Val S. Via Email.

Question or two

Dear publishers,

I have a question or two. Could anyone supply me with a recipe for potting mix? Does anyone know if earth or compost worms will eat rhubarb leaves in great quantity without being poisoned? PO Box 49, Mt. Compass. SA. 5210. Wonderful magazine.

E. Perreau, Mt. Compass, S.A.

Kerosene or hen-powered

Good day all,

Being long time readers of *Earth Garden* and living the good life, we would like to congratulate you on your purchase of the Blade Runner.

In answer to Jocelyn Layton (*Earth People Write* 143) regarding incubators, before electricity, kerosene was used. We have a Goyrold kerosene incubator that is still in operation. Other than that, a bantam hen makes the best incubator and mother.

Bob Causton, Wattamonara, N.S.W.

Room-sized Coolgardie

Dear Alan,

In Summer *Earth Garden* issue 142, Peter Hatfield asked about a Coolgardie Safe at room size. The easy answer to his request is to use charcoal in walls from three inches thick at top expanding to six inches at the bottom.

Peter would need a tank the full room size with baffle plates to help maintain water levels in the tank. It should be at least six inches deep and have tiny holes in the bottom around the edge, *not in the sides*. The water dribble-feeds into

the charcoal, and the air or breeze will cool the room.

The bottom tank must be wider than the charcoal by three inches at least; the sides must be deeper than six inches — I think about eight inches.

In the centre of the ceiling an air vent should be fitted and filtered for flies and dust. Water can be recycled using a solar-powered fishpond pump.

Inside netting must be small-holed bird netting. The outside netting can be a little bigger in hole size, about one inch in diameter. The netting must be wired together through the charcoal to stop the charcoal moving down, and allowing the heat in, because no charcoal, no water, no cooling. Keep the charcoal right up to the top tank and the water will get to the right place. So you'll need lots of wire ties across each wall and many rows of ties.

A tank over the doorway will catch water from the wall above the door and supply water via the tank into the charcoal in the door.

That's my story. It's a bit of work, and water and breeze will do the rest — it only freezes in winter.

George Ellis, Rooty Hill, NSW.

Anglo watering, diving test

Dear *Earth Garden*,

One way and another, I must have read every issue you have printed but cannot recall ever seeing you advise the way we watered the tomatoes in England, a country not noted for dry spells! Take the top off a tin can, punch holes in the bottom, stick it in the soil next to the tomato plant and fill with water each day.

Place a dish of water midway between two fairly distant bricks and lay a plank across. Walk across the plank with forked twig held loosely in hands and you will find out if you can divine water. About one in ten are said to have the ability. All for now. Lots of love. Yours truly.

John Guest, Rockhampton, Qld.

Trev, the electric car from SA

The Editor,

I was very interested in your article titled 'The Mood's Electric' in the Spring edition (*Earth Garden* 141). Because your passion for electric cars is obvious, I wish to draw your attention to 'Trev' (two-seater renewable energy vehicle) being developed by the University of South Australia. Trev weighs about 300 kg, has a range of up to 150 km between recharging, and has normal small car acceleration and speed performance. It is potentially ideal for most urban commuting uses.

Trev competed in the Greenfleet Technology Class of the World Solar

Challenge from Darwin to Adelaide in October 2007. The car completed the 3020 kilometres with an average energy consumption of 6.2 kWh/100 km. Electricity cost about one cent per kilometre. Recharged from solar, wind or hydro, there are no emissions. Electric cars are the way to go but don't get the support they deserve. Your help by reviewing the potential of this vehicle in a future edition of *Earth Garden* would be appreciated by many. The University of South Australia contact is Dr Peter Pudney PHD. Email: peter.pudney@unisa.edu.au

Barrie Grigg, Mt. Gambier, SA.

Wow! That's exciting Barrie. We have become very interested in electric vehicles since acquiring the Blade Runner and hope to present articles on more types of urban runabouts as they are released onto the market. Many years ago I decided to minimise the number of articles about prototypes, lab experiments, and concepts to focus on the here and now, with solar gear, wind turbines and the like that are actually in production and available now. For example, I am hopeful that the REVA electric car will one day be legal in Australia — another example similar to the Trev. I will enjoy following up your lead — thank you.

— Alan.

New spin on old clotheslines

G'day Earth Gardeners,

I've got an idea that may help my city friends out there, where space is limited. Traditional washing lines take up a heap of yard space. The normal yard has it located just outside the back door — right where you want your herb garden! You can have your cake and eat it too. Clotheslines can spin. When hanging or taking in washing we tend to stand in one area and rotate the washing line. We don't walk around the line.

My suggestion is for you to allow yourself a standing space equal to the area of one triangular side of the line. The rest of the space under the line could then be a garden of low-growing herbs and veg (on the house side). Pak choy, oregano and strawberries are some possibilities. Any water that drips off the washing would be an added bonus of this layout. All the best.

Penelope Fry, Brisbane, QLD.

Dear Penelope,

What a great idea. Thanks for sharing it with us. If any readers give it a go, please send us your feedback on how it works and a few photos — we'd love to see it.

— Fiona

Prodigious mud oven

Dear Karen,

Thank you for the mud oven stories. I want to be able to build ovens for (or with) my adult children. My own oven, my husband built for me, is shown in the attached photos, which I like to show off. Isn't it a beauty?! Having been a bread baker for 37 years and living in the bush, the bread (mine and others) that the oven produces is prodigious. It also bakes delicious cheese pastry crackers. Hope you enjoy my photos.

Robin Ellenberger, Travellers Retreat, TAS.

Hi Robyn,

Thanks very much for sending us your oven pics. It's a beauty alright! Those pizzas look great too - you've made me hungry!

Regards, Karen.

PS. Don't forget that you can still purchase our book 'Back Yard Ovens' through the Good Life Book Club. Phone: (03) 5424 1814. Lots of inspiration for all those contemplating making their own beautiful oven.

Why the delay for organic food

Dear Alan,

Reference: *Earth Garden* Summer edition 142, Bush Telegraph: Organic Food; Permaculture in Hindsight by Bruce Hedge: old age and the disappearance of forests. Organic food is said to be better! Well it has taken these officials (whoever they are) a long time to wake up. Isn't it surprising that modern scientists are unable to draw logical conclusions from previous studies based on a keen scientific foundation and observations. Today they need very expensive studies carried out in analytical laboratories to prove what was known years ago (I guess they have to earn a living).

In the early '50s, the Henry Doubtless Soil Association in England tested

the effect of organic pastures versus artificially fertilised ones, each having cattle feeding on them. It was discovered that, although the artificially fertilised pastures produced lush green grass growth as compared to the organic ones, the cattle feeding on the organic lots needed to eat less and were in better health than those feeding on the lush grass. All things being equal, the only conclusion that could be drawn was that the lush growth was nutrient deficient. And so are our supermarket products, big and plump but alas nutrient deficient too.

A study published by the *Vegetarian* magazine about ten years ago stated that a group of organic vegetables contained ten to twenty times more of the macro-nutrients calcium, sodium, potassium, phosphorous and iron than the supermarket produce. To this day I am not aware of a similar study on the micro-elements such as trace minerals.

Ah! But organic costs more doesn't it? If one kilogram of organic carrots would cover all your nutrient needs, you would have to consume about ten kilograms of the supermarket produce. And keep in mind that the current epidemic of obese people isn't a question of weak willed people. The plain fact is that junk food eaters are constantly hungry because what they eat is seriously deficient in nutrients.

Bruce Hedge wonders about the slowing down of old age. As an eighty-year-old retiree, I can tell him, "what a blessing." Looking after myself and my organic garden takes all my time, and I don't find the time to get bored. With my best regards and wishing you, and all Earth Gardeners, good health and good rains for 2008.

Frank Schenk, Osborne Park, WA.

Remedy for Spear Grass ulcers

Dear Editor, Staff, and Readers,

This is the first time I have had the time to sit down to write a little note! Thanks *Earth Garden* crew for the

books. One lady sent me some books but she did not add her name or address. I would like to have sent her a note but I'll say thank you here. Another lady sent me a note and her offer of magazines has been gratefully accepted.

When I was a little girl, I would tell all the flies to go to Bourke. And when I knew I was coming out this way to live and work for a while, I thought "My God, I hope all the flies I told to go to Bourke aren't there." And they were! (Now I'm looking for a new job — this one has finished!). Some tips:

1. Around the house and sheds I have fly traps, so that helps, but when you're in the paddocks, they are waiting for you!

2. To stop pesky pests that climb trees or vines smear petroleum jelly around the trunk base.

3. For cramps at night time: the Royal Flying Doctors told me to drink one glass (big glass) of tonic water at night before going to bed. If you don't like the taste, make up some fruit juice and add the big glass of tonic water to it!

4. I don't use talcum powder (I'm allergic to it). Instead I use cornflour or maize flour (fine). I just add apple blossoms, orange or other citrus fruit blossoms, sprigs of mint or other herbs. I put it into a glass screw top jar. Put holes in the lid with a nail (which I keep especially for this). I use it like talc and it's much better.

5. Don't grow Mitchell Curly Grass or Spear Grass around your house, sheds or yards. Pull it out and burn it as it causes leg ulcers, skin complaints and eye problems in all living things! I have a bad leg ulcer caused by Spear Grass and I can't get rid of it! It's very painful. Does anyone have any remedy suggestions please as I have tried everything. Yours sincerely, Jillaroo. 'Wongawal Station,' at Louth Road, Louth, via Cobarr, Western NSW. 2835. Ph: (02) 6836 4525 (after dark).

R.J. ('Jillaroo') Parkins, Louth, NSW.

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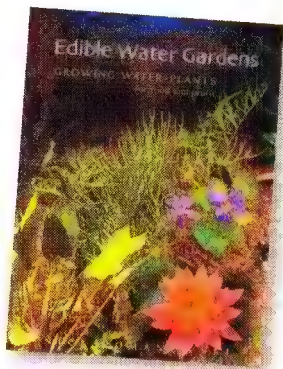
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EARTH GARDEN REVIEWS

BOOKS AND MUSIC

Edited by Judith Gray



Edible Water Gardens
by Nick Romanowski
Published by Hyland House
A4 full colour, 147 pages
\$49.95*

This book is both practical and easy to use — not surprising, coming from the aquatic plants expert, Nick Romanowski. Over the years, *Earth Garden* readers have found Nick's knowledge, skill and experience to shine through his clear, no-fuss writing. All of Nick's books have been both timely and fascinating, and this is no exception. In his usual way this book is prepared with both the home gardener and the commercial gardener in mind.

Aquatic plants aren't a single well-defined group of plants; they are from many diverse families. In fact, it is believed, some aquatic plants were among the first plants to be farmed by humans. The aquatic plant rice is one of the most important plants known to mankind. Nick argues that as aquaculture becomes increasingly common as an alternative source of food, many of the species discussed in this book will become more widely known and cultivated.

Many of these plants will hold shorelines and waterways together, will filter and purify water, and create habitat for animals and birds as well as offering a valuable food source. All this whilst displaying such beauty!

Use this book according to where plants grow. Start with water's edge plants, move out to deeper-water plants. Don't forget floating plants as well as waterlilies and lotuses. Wetland plants, plants for

waterlogged soils, and seasonal wetlands are all discussed. Learn about underwater landscaping and how to propagate plants for aquariums.

Did you know that the best grades of freshwater wasabi grown in Japan are valued at prices up to US\$250 a kilogram. Not bad for a plant that resembles a giant violet! Used fresh, the stems are grated as required onto fish or noodle dishes. Horseradish-adulterated products are more readily available, as the conditions the wasabi plant likes are quite specific. In the wild it grows along cool snow-fed streams, shaded in summer but exposed to sunlight in winter. Ideal growing temperatures are between 10 and 13 degrees Celsius, but temperatures below minus three degrees Celsius can cause serious damage. There are at least three distinct types of wasabi.

This book is inspirational, and I am sure will have many of you out in the garden filling buckets of water to start your first crop of Chinese water chestnuts.



Simple Biodiesel
(2nd Edition) The Easy Guide
To Home Diesel Manufacture
by Robert Sharman
75 pages. A4, black and white
Published by Tasman Energy
\$29.95*

Robert Sharman has been making his own fuel on a fortnightly basis for the last nine years. He currently drives a Volkswagen caddy van, which has a direct injection turbo-charged diesel engine. Sounds pretty fancy, but apparently quite common in Europe. So, with fuel prices so high in Australia (and

worldwide), is homemade biodiesel the answer? With so much waste cooking oil available in the West, it's certainly worth a look.

Robert's book is very clearly written, easy to understand and very much a practical *Earth Garden*-style manual.

Start with the basics. Learn how to collect and filter your oil. Never heat your oil over 60 degrees Celsius. Your second major ingredient is methanol. Then get some sodium hydroxide, sulphuric acid and a few other basics and you're under way.

Now it's very important to note that there are some precautions that need to be considered when dealing with these substances. A fire extinguisher is essential.

Follow simple directions to make small batches. When you have got that down pat, use this book to build your own processing plant at home. Combine, mix and wash your own diesel, ready for your vehicle.

The original diesel engine (designed by the Frenchman Rudolph Diesel) ran on peanut oil. In fact, Diesel died before he could complete his invention and it wasn't until 1927, when Robert Bosch developed the diesel fuel injector, that the era of the diesel engine really took off.

The petroleum industry was well established by then and Rudolph's talk of peanut oil was a forgotten dream.

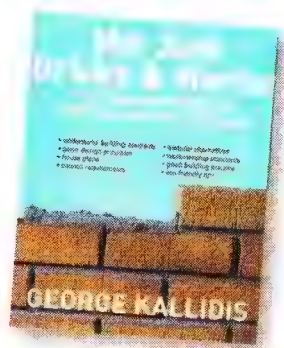
Modern-day commercial biodiesel comes at a price. With land clearing and food crops sacrificed to grow crops such as palm oil for biodiesel, the social and environmental impacts are serious.

Biodiesel made from recycled oil is the responsible path to take — with care please, and make sure you have a fire plan.

Not Just Bricks & Mortar
(The Complete Guide to
Home Building in Australia)
by George Kallidis
Published by New Holland
Publishers

**Large Format, black & white,
239 pages \$39.95***

Author George Kallidis has first-hand experience of the building industry. He has worked in contract preparation, design and drafting, estimating and on-site management as well as project management. This



gives him a full picture. George has witnessed many a client-builder dispute.

"The purpose of this book is to help people gain basic building knowledge, alert them to the pitfalls and offer them the opportunity of having a good building experience," he writes.

Written in seven parts, this book covers all aspects of the building process. It is written in a no-fuss style and explains builders' language extremely simply. Part one will introduce the sequence of steps in building a home, while part two looks at information on good building design. Part three will guide you through basic understanding of house plans. Part four discusses factors to consider when buying a block and finally parts five, six and seven will provide information on all the trades from concrete through to painting.

The book is packed with diagrams and photographs. This book is very much a beginner's guide to understanding a complicated process.

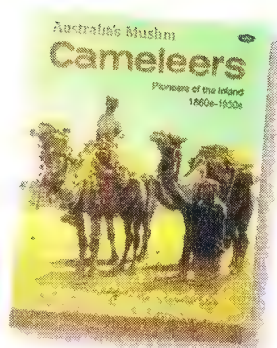
Learn what points a building contract will refer to and what a builder will require from the owner before works begin.

Learn about health regulations, covenants and zoning. This book also gives tips on best building practices through to basics such as what type of brick joint you may require! It's all here.

This book is as much a guide for the owner-builder as it is for the person employing a builder. It's a companion, offering an overview, that will ensure your building project runs as smoothly as possible.

**Australia's Muslim
Cameleers – Pioneers of
the Inland 1860–1930s**
by Philip Jones & Anna Kenny
A4 soft cover, 191 pages,
colour. \$39.95

The release of this remarkable pictorial history was timed to coincide with the opening at the National Library of Australia, Canberra of the Touring Exhibition *Pioneers of the Inland: Australia's Muslim Cameleers 1860–1930s*. The exhibition is touring regional centres until the end of June 2008.



I wonder how it has come about that the cameleers of the inland have been almost left out of our pioneering history. Was it the White Australia policy of 1901, or perhaps a misunderstanding of both their customs and circumstances?

The so-called 'Afghan Cameleers' originated from many different regions including Pakistan and northern India as well as Afghanistan. It's important to note that the people of Afghanistan were known at the time for having resisted British forces and were seen as somewhat elusive.

Did you know that in 1869, Afghan cameleers staged one of Australia's first successful labour strikes?

The 'Afghans' travelled with so little. They were here on contracts, their womenfolk stayed in their country of origin and their religious practices were quite foreign to the average white fella, so it's not surprising that the information presented in this book is like a treasure. Observe their saddle-making skills, see photographs of their mud and stick mosques. Not to mention just how many different ways you can tie a turban!

Camels transported everything from gold ore in Western Australia to railway sleepers in South Australia. Hawkers supplied stations and outposts.

Camels and their handlers played an important role in exploration. We all remember Burke and Wills took camels with them, but other explorers such as Elder, Calvert, the Strzelecki expedition and the Madigan-Simpson expedition of 1939 all relied heavily on the cameleers.

Look at the relationship between the cameleers and Aboriginal people. Find out what life was like in camel camps and learn what happened to those proud souls who chose to stay in Australia and make it a home. Their descendants display their memorabilia and show themselves to be directly linked to these strong and resourceful pioneers of the outback.

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TASMANIA — HUON BUSH RETREATS. Relax, Explore, Experience, Nature. S/C cabins and campground in private nature reserve, 45 mins from Hobart. Ph: (03) 6264 2233. Web: www.huonbushretreats.com.

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WOOD FIRED OVEN WORKSHOPS (as featured in 'Back Yard Ovens'). For full details and future workshop dates and venues – www.woodfiredovenworkshops.com.

CERTIFIED ORGANIC BABY PRODUCTS. Phone: 1300 555 632 for your FREE colour brochure or visit our Byron Bay Store. www.natureschild.com.au.

EARTH GARDEN MAGAZINES FOR SALE \$2.50 each. Please phone: (02) 6654 4114 for issue numbers.

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WASHING MACHINES. Interstate collector wants top loading automatics. 35 years and older. Brands like Simpson, Turner, Wilkins Servis, Frigidaire, Healing/ Thor, Hoover, Kelvinator and Pope Norge. Also any washers that have cabinets painted in original colours like mustard, green and dark Brown. Working or not. Do you have one? Leon Ph: (07) 3254 4489 or 0409 637 712.

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MINI COWS (115 cm) two pairs of purebred pet Dexter steers \$900/pair. Very friendly, great lawn mowers, can be trained to harness to pull carts or plough the land. For sale as pets NOT FOR BEEF. Kerry Ph: 0414 880 193 or 4572 1628 before 5 pm. Kukki Ph: 0421 324 413. Email: kukki_kaushik@hotmail.com.

WOOD STOVE, solar water with electric boost combo. See http://people.aapt.net.au/AAPT_5688605 for photos. \$1200, Nambucca, NSW, Ph: (02) 6564 8413.

ECO-WORKSHOPS – Gudhara Holistic Sanctuary, Southern Highlands. Hands on residential workshops at sustainable retreat centre include: Design and Construct with Solar Technology (25–27 July); Building Biology (23–24 August); Bio Dynamics – Practical Applications, (7–9 November); Mudbrick and Cob Construction (5–7 December). Details gudhara@bigpond.com Ph: 0403 203 963. Web: www.gudhara.org.au.

COUNSELLING BY EMAIL – non-judgmental general counselling service offered by qualified counsellor. Free, no obligation initial email. Check out www.email

counselling.com.au for more information or Email: counselling@activecounselling.com.au.

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FRUIT TREES – HERITAGE and MODERN. Apples (over 100 varieties), cherries, quinces, pears, stone fruit, figs, mulberries, limes, persimmons, nuts and berries. For free catalogue please contact: YALCA FRUIT TREES, 602 Tyack's Road, Yalca 3637, Phone: (03) 5868 2101, Email: info@yalcafruittrees.com.au.

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NEW SOUTH WALES

1. PRIVATE TWO ACRE SHARE in 1200 acres, 20 km west of Taylor's Arm. Cabin, solar power, gas hot water, fridge, stove. Shed. Phone (02) 6564 2296. \$75,000.



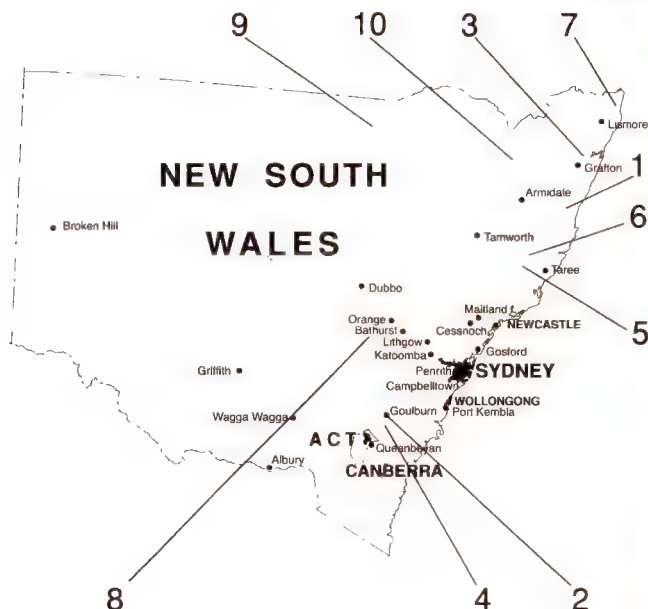
2. GOULBURN AREA - \$269,000 NEG. 25 acres with weatherboard cottage. On sealed road 30 mins to Goulburn, two hours to Sydney. Fenced with three dams. Near new cottage with TV, phone, internet, slow combustion heating,

gas hot water. Fully serviced by solar system, but mains electricity also available. 2/3 timbered with riding/hiking trails, lovely gardens, orchard, veggie patch. Abundant native wildlife, very secluded. Fully self sufficient for power and water. A perfect getaway or tree change. Ph: (02) 4844 5045. **SEE PHOTOS.**



3. THREE ACRES in beautiful Maclean NSW. Situated at the end of a country lane yet right in the heart of town. One acre zoned 2a residential, the remaining zoned 7c. With beautiful outlooks and breathtaking views this block has potential, potential, potential. Subdivide or keep as a natural haven and build your dream home. \$325,000. More information at www.siriyad.com or Phone: 0413 070 095. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**

4. REAL ESTATE DEAL OF THE CENTURY? NOT A FARM – 60km SE of Goulburn freehold property of approx. 1000 acres mainly uncleared with a beautiful four bedroom ranch-style homestead with extensive infrastructure and a productive garden/orchard. Price \$850,000 negotiable. NOTE: Also included in this price is an additional 1000 acres Government approved wildlife sanctuary on the same title free from local government rates. The entire property has a 12km frontage to the Shoalhaven River Gorge. Phone: (02) 4844 5091. Email: samandken@bigbpond.com.



5. FOR SALE - 5 ACRE allotted share in a rural community (tenants in common title) 18 km from Gloucester. Lovely bush surroundings with State Forest at boundary and water nearby. \$35,000. Ph: 0409 901 868. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**

6. WANTING A C/TREE CHANGE – LIVE MORE SIMPLY/SUSTAINABLY IN THE BEST CLIMATE IN AUSTRALIA? Owner sad to sell much loved 100 acres of paradise – approx 2/3 cleared- five fully fenced feed-improved paddocks. Two creeks. Two permanent dams, one spring-fed. 6000 gals rain/2000 gals dam storage. 3/4 finished rustic, charming one bed cottage in process of approved conversion to dwelling (dual occupancy possible). Large attached auto lock-up garage. Magical 360° views mountains/valleys by day/ Milky Way by night. Glorious native/bird/wildlife attracting gardens, established fruit/ ideal for Permaculture. Solar power and generator/Gas fridge, hot water, stove/wood heater. 25 mins E to unspoilt, quiet beaches of Nambucca Heads. Six mins from Bowraville, an historic town with true community spirit and all service/leisure needs. 40 mins from Bellingen and beyond to cool lush World Heritage Jurassic Beech Forests atop



the Dorrigo Plateau. See picture \$315,000 reasonable offer considered. Email jannieoz@tiscali.co.uk for more pics/info. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**



7. SOLID ONE TO TWO BEDROOM HOUSE on five acres sharing 450 acres with ten other shares of a co-op. Solar power, spring water in a wilderness setting. It has many fruit trees on north facing slope, close to community vegie patch. Twenty five kms from Murrumbidgee one hr to Gold Coast. \$210,000. Ph: 0428199171 or Email: outhereee@bc.wbs.net.au. **SEE PHOTOS.**



8. ORGANIC OPPORTUNITY. Fantastic valley views and a chance to participate in the fast growing organic food industry are available just five minutes from the historic friendly town of Canowindra, on the fertile soils of the Belubula River Valley. Features: 8.65 Ha (20 acre) freehold farming block, ACO certified organic. 0.5 Ha (1.25 acre) freehold house block with superb views. 1/12th share in Community Title assets including 20 Ha of tree lined access ways, modern irrigation system, river/bore licence and infrastructure. 12 x 7 mt. colourbond shed with toilet, bath, shower for weekend use. Three phase power, water connected. Live and work sustainably alongside people sharing similar environmental and health values. Other block owners live in or are building straw bale/earth houses.



\$200,000. Details at www.organicfarms.com.au or phone Rob: 0427 257 206. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**



9. LIGHTNING RIDGE NSW \$45,000. Beautiful secluded camp, close to town. Three train carriages, one fully renovated. Solar and generator power, A/C, gas HWS, stove and fridge. Partly furnished. Western Lands Lease and Mineral Claim. Mining equipment and mine shafts. Abundant wildlife. Phone: (02) 6829 1335, 0438 671 722. Email: steve@vitalinfofor you.com. **SEE PHOTOS.**



10. 20 ACRE LIFESTYLE BLOCK at Emmaville, 50 km from Glen Innes. Unique position, country privacy but walking distance to amenities including school, hospital and pool. Cleared and timbered areas, a large house pad positioned high on the block with protection from the south and west and beautiful views to the north. Bordered by a reserve on two sides, lots of wildlife. Building entitlement obtained, power, phone and garbage available. Low rates, fully fenced, one dam, road to house site. Plenty of stone, perfect for building, brand new cement mixer and wheel barrow included. \$105,000. Ph: (02) 6734 5313.

QUEENSLAND



1. LOWMEAD \$289,950 Waterfall Wonderland. 16.62 ha (41.069 acres) with rainforest walks, seasonal creek with rock pools and waterfall. This two bedroom, 12 month old open plan home is in harmony with its natural surrounds. 3m full length hardwood deck at the front and stumped on steel. EPA approved 24 volt solar system. Rainwater is collected in 2 x 7500 gallon poly tanks. Additional 600 gallon header tank. A large dam irrigates via a petrol pump to the central landscaped garden. Guests can be accommodated in a 16ft caravan a short distance from the home. At the front of the property is a 6m site office and container; a breezeway with concrete floor connects the two and would make a perfect teenage retreat, it also has a 2600 gallon rainwater storage tank. We also have 16 ha vacant land from \$129k and some delightful holiday rentals. DL 3055507 www.organicodyssey.com.au Ph: (07) 4156 6556. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**



2. STUNNING 360° MOUNTAINS AND RIVER VIEWS, 16 Km from Innisfail. 57 acres on 4 titles: 40 acres pristine rainforest, rest fertile volcanic red soil. South Johnstone river frontage, two permanent creeks, two waterfalls. Three/four bedroom steel-framed low-set house, large verandas, very large carport, concrete pool with spa, solar hot water, wood oven. \$780,000. Contact owners: (07) 4097 7741 Mob 0488 544 389. For more photos: theshalapa@gotalk.net.au. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**



3. SPLIT-LEVEL, FOUR BEDROOM rammed earth house in Beechmont, 45 minutes from Gold Coast. Certified organic vegies on two blocks comprising five acres. House/

market-garden \$698,000. Vacant block \$310,000. Solar hot water, nine solar panels feeding into grid, Biolytix sewage treatment, in-ground pool, bore, greenhouse, two sheds, cool-room. Ph: (07) 5533 3315, Email: dandsmarriott@bigpond.com. **SEE PHOTOS.**

4. SPECTACULAR PROPERTY! 30 acres pristine rainforest, abundant wildlife, permanent creek with waterfalls and swimming hole, perfect hydro potential, underground power, good access, 3/4 bedroom, two bath, two storey modern house with large deck and detached studio/workshop, Mena Creek area far north Qld \$495,000. View: www.owner.com.au ID 39227. Ph: (07) 4065 5072.



5. RUSSELL ISLAND. 40 km ESE from Brisbane CBD in beautiful Moreton Bay. Seachange AND Treechange. Organic food forest and comfortable, cute two bedroom cottage. With floor tiles throughout and wonderful clean air fresh from the Pacific Ocean it is perfect for someone with chemical sensitivities or allergies. The bore produces 2400 litres/hour of crystal clear water and is used for the automated watering system. 1650 sq metres of frost free land supports numerous established fruit trees, herbs, flowers, large veggie patch, generous chook pen and garden shed. The fertile high para-magnetic volcanic soil is over 40 feet deep and slopes very gently to north. Mains power, town water, septic, telephone, three minutes to boat ramp, shops, primary school, doctor, chemist. Rates \$1250 year. \$298,000. See: www.russell55.com or phone: 0418 152 388. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**



6. RAINFOREST RETREAT IN THE WHITSUNDAYS, 15 MINS FROM AIRLIE BEACH. 49 private acres of vine rainforest adjoining national park. Two and a half year old timber

eco-house; big verandahs, beautiful polished wooden floors; two bedrooms plus study; stand-alone solar power; solar hot water; 59 000 litre rainwater storage; generous shed. \$550K. Call: 0437 947 923 or Email: longgrass@mackay.net.au. **SEE PHOTO.**

VICTORIA

1. MUST LOVE TREES! This two and half acre block has views of Colac Lake. Balintore is 10 km northwest out of Colac, Victoria. Three bedroom brick home. Three tanks full of water plus bore water and huge machinery shed. Best of all, 220 young indigenous variety of trees. A bargain for \$265K. Contact Rose Ph: 0433 544 312 or Email: rose.cerdena@gmail.com.



2. PROPERTY FOR SALE IN WELSHMANS REEF, Central Victoria 40 acres of conservation covenant protected Box Ironbark bushland with open plan solar passive mudbrick home. One bedroom. Brick paved floors throughout. Separate bathroom with Rotaloo composting toilet. Gas fridge and cook top. Nectar Bakers Oven with water jacket. Stand alone solar power with back up generator. Solar hot water. 45,000 litre rain water tank, dam, raised vegetable garden, young orchard watered by grey water system. Mudbrick chookhouse. Five minutes to Newstead and Maldon. 20 minutes to Castlemaine. 65 minute fast train commute to Melbourne. \$235,000. Phone Fran and Glenn (03) 54 762 731. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**

3. ANAKIE, 100 LOVES LANE. Architecturally designed with the environment in mind. Using recycled timber, bricks and slate this outstanding Alistair Knox designed mud brick home will definitely impress. The current owners have set the home up to be largely self sufficient with plenty of water available. There is a flourishing veggie patch plus an orchard that supplies an abundance of fruit. Three paddocks are neatly fenced and will handle stock. The home features three bedrooms, master with ensuite and walk in robe, two living areas, mezzanine, fourth bedroom or artists studio plus a double storey barn that must be viewed to be appreciated. The spectacular garden is made up largely by Australian natives plus there is a beautiful fernery and glasshouse on the block. With so much to see inspection of this home is a must. Matthew Pearce. Barry Plant Real Estate. 230



Moorabool Street, Geelong. Ph: 0425 749 326. **SEE PHOTOS ABOVE.**

4. ESCAPE TO GREAT OCEAN ROAD COASTLINE. Uniquely private property surrounded by secluded beaches and national parks - ideal getaway or investment. Ninety two undulating acres with mix of Manna Gum forest and pasture, abundant wildlife. Home sites with sea/bush views. Walk to secluded beaches, abundant fishing, diving, camping. Property run organically since 2000, 30 acres fenced for paddocks. Twenty mins to Apollo Bay, 2.5 hours to Melbourne. Offers



over \$400,000, contact Jenni Meumann Ph: 0244 735999. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**



5. BUSH RETREAT - JOHANNA. Five acre bush block with northerly aspect, neighbouring Otway National Park. Two bedroom house with tanks, power, chook shed, dam and vegie garden with over 1m of rain annually. Five minutes to beautiful beaches and 25 minutes to Apollo Bay. \$350,000. Ph: Gary 0418 550 049. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**

6. FOR SALE: 50A GRANT ST, DAYLESFORD \$365 000 ONO. Beautiful two storey strawbale house, Jarrah kitchen, Coonara fireplace, cathedral ceiling, spa bath, huge Jarrah deck, ten min walk to town. Call Jenny: 0412 540 070 or Paul at Daylesford Real Estate: (03) 5348 1122. **SEE PHOTOS BELOW.**



WESTERN AUSTRALIA



2.5 ORGANIC ACRES WITH SOLAR HOME. 150 metre Canning River frontage, 30 min train/drive to Perth CBD, four BR two bath fairytale A-frame cottage, new grid-connected solar electricity, solar HWS, open fire, rammed-earth shed, chicken yards/housing, tall gums, lightly treed paddocks. Opportunity of a lifetime for riverfront tree change close to major city. \$799,000. More photos: marybarton@dodo.com.au. Ph: 0407 999 610. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**

TASMANIA



1. 'MANNA PARK' IS A UNIQUE PROPERTY set in 13 acres of parkland on the sunny northeast coast of Tasmania, surrounded by State forest with crystal clear river frontage, only 12km from pristine beaches and town facilities. Property includes two storey brick home, six bedrooms, (four double) two bathrooms, shower room, study, large kitchen/dining and lounge. A separate self-contained, furnished cottage, set privately from house, BBQ chalet,

shedding, chicken house, veggie garden and rain water tanks. Potential for multiple uses. \$620,000 ONO. Owner Ph: (03) 6372 5682 or mobile: 0408 137 253. **SEE PHOTO.**



2. MAGNIFICENT THREE ACRE PROPERTY, beautiful gardens, lovely cottage, double garage, mini golf course. Two bedroom self-contained guest house, potential B&B (STCA). Quiet area bordering on bush land, distant river views. \$320,000. Phone: 0448 665 531. E-mail: davidgrutzner@robertsre.com.au. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**



3. 284/302 COWENS ROAD, GARDNERS BAY. Tasmania, 7112. Offers over \$380,000. 'Lapoinya'. An exceptional parcel of land in unspoiled condition and a haven for Tasmanian flora and fauna. Situated on a ridge above Gardners Bay at the end of a forested private road sit two comfortable rustic timber residences positioned half a kilometre apart each on a personal six acre allotment with spectacular but diverse outlooks to the Hartz Mountains and hills above Woodbridge. An additional 38 acres of wilderness is shared by the properties to complete a 50 acre holding. Spring fed dams, basic solar power. Ten minute drive to either Cygnet or Woodbridge or a scenic 45 minutes north to Hobart. Contact Charlotte Peterswald Ph: 03 6224 7090. Kerry Shepperd/Craig Anderson www.charlottepeterswald.com.au Property no 1319338. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**

NEW ZEALAND

GREAT BARRIER ISLAND, NEW ZEALAND. A twentieth share in enchanting, secluded river valley (450 acres) off beautiful Port Fitzroy Harbour. Lush rainforest with pools, tree ferns, palms. Abundant native bird-life. Fantastic fishing and seafood. For own private use, two and a half acres fenced, with buildings – charming, Swiss-style cottage, sheltered position, with views, all mod cons including electricity (solar/wind power) and gas, flush eco toilet system. Also own separate, spacious guest accommodation, workshop, laundry, bee hut. For access, excellent aluminium



runabout with outboard on ramp. A very special lifestyle. \$235,000 (Aus). Ph: (03) 5133 6456. **SEE PHOTO ABOVE.**

WANTED / FOR RENT / FARM SIT

RENTAL/CARETAKER. Beautiful but isolated little valley. 4WD access. 40 acres. One acre fenced paddock. Three fenced (two netted) vegetable gardens. One small orchard. Comfortable house. Big shed. Hunter region, 20km to Cessnock. Two hours to Sydney. Up to five years lease, low rent in return for property maintenance. Ph: 0402 854 208 or Email: claresyd@optushome.com.au.

FOR RENT - FULLY FURNISHED BUNGALOW. Self motivated person looking for healthy lifestyle in rural retreat Dorrigo Plateau, NSW. Ph: (02) 6657 8212. \$70 pw including electricity.

HOUSESIT/CARETAKING sought by professional female couple seek long-term, from Oct 2008 in Northern NSW. Excellent references. Email: marg66@tiscali.co.uk.

FOR RENT. Train carriages on 2.5 hectares on multiple occupancy in NIMBIN. Three bedrooms, furnished with quality inclusions. References required. \$160 per week. Call: (08) 8672 3364 Mob: 0417 863 998.

FAMILIES NEEDING EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION. Cottage on hobby farm, three bedroom, fully furnished, rent \$100/wk, on school bus run. No smokers or drug users. Seasonal work in Stanthorpe district. Phone after 7pm (07) 4684 5124 or Email: sanssouci@halenet.com.au.

WILDISH, ADVENTUROUS, intelligent, alternative minded family of six (seven in Sep) want rent country/bush alternative power/eco friendly house, good soil/water, Vic/SA/any moderate climate. Wealth of skills, mum creative, passionate gardener/everything alternative, dad robotics engineer, computers, electronics, mechanical, currently working CSIRO looking for opportunity to create sustainable systems, kids are unschooled, independent thinkers. Rent/caretake/creative trade all welcome. Michael triffid_hunter@funkmunch.net Ph: 0403 144 153, Rimfire rinfiredancing@gmail.com, Ph: (07) 3876 0169.

MOVING TO QUEENSLAND in a few weeks – looking to house-sit. Prefer longish term – will care for garden/animals – (organic principles). My garden was featured in *Earth Garden*, Winter 1998. I am a non-smoker, non-drinker. Please ring 0400 429 628.

CARETAKER COUPLE NEEDED to help us care for our farm in Corowa NSW. Beautiful cottage available in lieu of two days work per week. Ideal for active retirees. Long term. Email: farmland8@yahoo.com.au.

WANTED. Place to rent in Deloraine (Tasmania) area for several weeks in June to accommodate one woman and two dogs. Require warmth and good bed but can be basic. May wish to extend. Have interest in permaculture but not necessary. Helen 0438 662284; helenmurnanes@hotmail.com.

A selection of sustainable living books available from *Earth Garden*. For the full list of books, see 'The Good Life Book Club' catalogue (available free). Phone The Good Life hotline on: (03) 5424 1814.

PLEASE ADD POSTAGE, AND ALLOW 3 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY. ALL PRICES INCLUDE GST

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GOOD LIFE BREAD BOOK – \$19.95 (add postage).....	\$
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Green Power Today - Volume One – \$19.95 (add postage).....	\$
Back Yard Ovens – \$19.95 (add postage)	\$
Chook Wisdom – \$19.95 (add postage)	\$
Natural Home Builder — Volume One – \$19.95 (add postage)	\$
The Earth Garden Water Book — \$19.95 (add postage)	\$
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The House That Jackie Built – \$16.95 (add postage)	\$
Strawbale Homebuilding (160 pages) – \$19.95 (add postage)	\$
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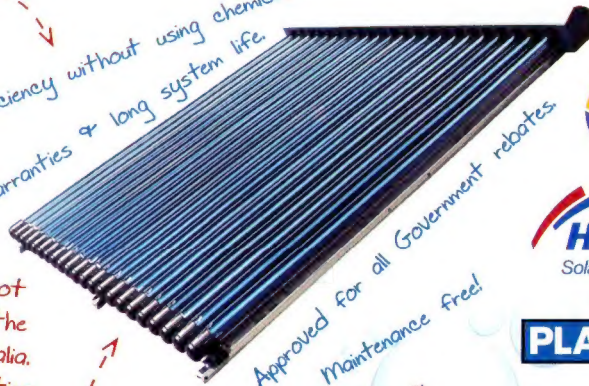
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